Drusilla Wahl Pierce

KROCHS BOOKSTORE
22 NORTH MICHIGAN AVE

THE MEMOIRS OF

JACQUES CASANOVA

WRITTEN BY HIMSELF NOW FOR
THE FIRST TIME TRANSLATED INTO
ENGLISH IN TWELVE VOLUMES
VOLUME FOUR

PRIVATELY PRINTED
FOR SUBSCRIBERS ONLY

Privately Printed for Subscribers Only.
Edition strictly limited to 750 sets on Albion laid deckle-edge paper and 50 sets on Crocker Japan Vellum.

Printed from type and type distributed.

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MEMOIRS

OF

JACQUES CASANOVA

CHAPTER I

VISIT TO THE CONVENT AND CONVERSATION WITH M. M.—A LETTER FROM HER, AND MY ANSWER—ANOTHER INTERVIEW AT THE CASINO OF MURAN IN THE PRESENCE OF HER LOVER.

According to my promise, I went to see M—— M—— two days afterwards, but as soon as she came to the parlour she told me that her lover had said he was coming, and that she expected him every minute, and that she would be glad to see me the next day. I took leave of her, but near the bridge I saw a man, rather badly masked, coming out of a gondola. I looked at the gondolier, and I recognized him as being in the service of the French ambassador. "It is he," I said to myself, and without

appearing to observe him I watched him enter the convent. I had no longer any doubt as to his identity, and I returned to Venice delighted at having made the discovery, but I made up my mind not to say anything to my mistress.

I saw her on the following day, and we had a long conversation together, which I am now going to relate.

"My friend," she said to me, "came yesterday in order to bid farewell to me until the Christmas holidays. He is going to Padua, but everything has been arranged so that we can sup at his casino whenever we wish."

"Why not in Venice?"

"He has begged me not to go there during his absence. He is wise and prudent; I could not refuse his request."

"You are quite right. When shall we sup together?"

"Next Sunday, if you like."

"If I like is not the right expression, for I always like. On Sunday, then, I will go to the casino towards night-fall, and wait for you with a book. Have you told your friend that you were not very uncomfortable in my small palace?"

"He knows all about it, but, dearest, he is afraid of one thing—he fears a certain fatal plumpness. . . ."

"On my life, I never thought of that! But,

my darling, do you not run the same risk with him?"

"No, it is impossible."

"I understand you. Then we must be very prudent for the future. I believe that, nine days before Christmas, the mask is no longer allowed, and then I shall have to go to your casino by water, otherwise, I might easily be recognized by the same spy who has already followed me once."

"Yes, that idea proves your prudence, and I can easily shew you the place. I hope you will be able to come also during Lent, although we are told that at that time God wishes us to mortify our senses. Is it not strange that there is a time during which God wants us to amuse ourselves almost to frency, and another during which, in order to please Him, we must live in complete abstinence? What is there in common between a yearly observance and the Deity, and how can the action of the creature have any influence over the Creator, whom my reason cannot conceive otherwise than independent? It seems to me that if God had created man with the power of offending Him, man would be right in doing everything that is forbidden to him, because the deficiences of his organization would be the work of the Creator Himself. How can we imagine God grieved during Lent?"

"My beloved one, you reason beautifully,

but will you tell me where you have managed, in a convent, to pass the Rubicon?"

"Yes. My friend has given me some good books which I have read with deep attention, and the light of truth has dispelled the darkness which blinded my eyes. I can assure you that, when I look in my own heart, I find myself more fortunate in having met with a person who has brought light to my mind than miserable at having taken the veil; for the greatest happiness must certainly consist in living and in dying peacefully—a happiness which can hardly be obtained by listening to all the idle talk with which the priests puzzle our brains."

"I am of your opinion, but I admire you, for it ought to be the work of more than a few months to bring light to a mind prejudiced as yours was."

"There is no doubt that I should have seen light much sooner if I had not laboured under so many prejudices. There was in my mind a curtain dividing truth from error, and reason alone could draw it aside, but that poor reason —I had been taught to fear it, to repulse it, as if its bright flame would have devoured, instead of enlightening me. The moment it was proved to me that a reasonable being ought to be guided only by his own inductions I acknowledged the sway of reason, and the mist which hid truth from me was

dispelled. The evidence of truth shone before my eyes, nonsensical trifles disappeared, and I have no fear of their resuming their influence over my mind, for every day it is getting stronger; and I may say that I only began to love God when my mind was disabused of priestly superstitions concerning Him."

"I congratulate you; you have been more fortunate than I, for you have made more progress in one year than I have made in ten."

"Then you did not begin by reading the writings of Lord Bolingbroke? Five or six months ago, I was reading *La Sagesse,* by Charron, and somehow or other my confessor heard of it; when I went to him for confession, he took upon himself to tell me to give up reading that book. I answered that my conscience did not reproach me, and that I could not obey him. 'In that case,' replied he, 'I will not give you absolution.' 'That will not prevent me from taking the communion,' I said. This made him angry, and, in order to know what he ought to do, he applied to Bishop Diedo. His eminence came to see me, and told me that I ought to be guided by my confessor. I answered that we had mutual duties to perform, and that the mission of a priest in the confessional was to listen to me, to impose a reasonable penance, and to give me absolution; that he had not even the right of offering me any advice if I did not ask for it. I added that the confessor being bound to avoid

scandal, if he dared to refuse me the absolution, which, of course, he could do, I would all the same go to the altar with the other nuns. The bishop, seeing that he was at his wit's end, told the priest to abandon me to my conscience. But that was not satisfactory to me, and my lover obtained a brief from the Pope authorizing me to go to confession to any priest I like. All the sisters are jealous of the privilege, but I have availed myself of it only once, for the sake of establishing a precedent and of strengthening the right by the fact, for it is not worth the trouble. I always confess to the same priest, and he has no difficulty in giving me absolution, for I only tell him what I like."

"And for the rest you absolve yourself?"

"I confess to God, who alone can know my thoughts and judge the degree of merit or of demerit to be attached to my actions."

Our conversation shewed me that my lovely friend was what is called a Free-thinker; but I was not astonished at it, because she felt a greater need of peace for her conscience than of gratification for her senses.

On the Sunday, after dinner, I took a two-oared gondola, and went round the island of Muran to reconnoitre the shore, and to discover the small door through which my mistress escaped from the convent. I lost my trouble and my time, for I did not become acquainted with the shore till the octave of Christmas, and with the small door

six months afterwards. I shall mention the circumstance in its proper place.

As soon as it was time, I repaired to the temple, and while I was waiting for the idol I amused myself in examining the books of a small library in the boudoir. They were not numerous, but they were well chosen and worthy of the place. I found there everything that has been written against religion, and all the works of the most voluptuous writers on pleasure; attractive books, the incendiary style of which compels the reader to seek the reality of the image they represent. Several folios, richly bound, contained nothing but erotic engravings. Their principal merit consisted much more in the beauty of the designs, in the finish of the work, than in the lubricity of the positions. I found amongst them the prints of the Portier des Chartreux, published in England; the engravings of Meursius, of Aloysia Sigea Toletana, and others, all very beautifully done. A great many small pictures covered the walls of the boudoir, and they were all masterpieces in the same style as the engravings.

I had spent an hour in examining all these works of art, the sight of which had excited me in the most irresistible manner, when I saw my beautiful mistress enter the room, dressed as a nun. Her appearance was not likely to act as a sedative, and therefore, without losing any time in compliments, I said to her,—

"You arrive most opportunely. All these erotic pictures have fired my imagination, and it is in your garb of a saint that you must administer the remedy that my love requires."

"Let me put on another dress, darling, it will not take more than five minutes."

"Five minutes will complete my happiness, and then you can attend to your metamorphosis."

"But let me take off these woollen robes, which I dislike."

"No; I want you to receive the homage of my love in the same dress which you had on when you gave birth to it."

She uttered in the humblest manner a *fiat voluntas tua,* accompanied by the most voluptuous smile, and sank on the sofa. For one instant we forgot all the world besides. After that delightful ecstacy I assisted her to undress, and a simple gown of Indian muslin soon metamorphosed my lovely nun into a beautiful nymph.

After an excellent supper, we agreed not to meet again till the first day of the octave. She gave me the key of the gate on the shore, and told me that a blue ribbon attached to the window over the door would point it out by day, so as to prevent my making a mistake at night. I made her very happy by telling her that I would come and reside in her casino until the return of her friend. During the ten days that I remained there, I saw her four times, and I convinced her that I lived only for her.

During my stay in the casino I amused myself in reading, in writing to C—— C——, but my love for her had become a calm affection. The lines which interested me most in her letters were those in which she mentioned her friend. She often blamed me for not having cultivated the acquaintance of M—— M——, and my answer was that I had not done so for fear of being known. I always insisted upon the necessity of discretion.

I do not believe in the possibility of equal love being bestowed upon two persons at the same time, nor do I believe it possible to keep love to a high degree of intensity if you give it either too much food or none at all. That which maintained my passion for M—— M—— in a state of great vigour was that I could never possess her without running the risk of losing her.

"It is impossible," I said to her once, "that some time or other one of the nuns should not want to speak to you when you are absent."

"No," she answered, "that cannot happen, because there is nothing more religiously respected in a convent than the right of a nun to deny herself, even to the abbess. A fire is the only circumstance I have to fear, because in that case there would be general uproar and confusion, and it would not appear natural that a nun should remain quietly locked up in her cell in the midst of such danger; my escape would then be dis-

covered. I have contrived to gain over the lay-sister and the gardener, as well as another nun, and that miracle was performed by my cunning assisted by my lover's gold. He answers for the fidelity of the cook and his wife who take care of the casino. He has likewise every confidence in the two gondoliers, although one of them is sure to be a spy of the State Inquisitors."

On Christmas Eve she announced the return of her lover, and she told him that on St. Stephen's Day she would go with him to the opera, and that they would afterwards spend the night together.

"I shall expect you, my beloved one," she added, "on the last day of the year, and here is a letter which I beg you not to read till you get home."

As I had to move in order to make room for her lover, I packed my things early in the morning, and, bidding farewell to a place in which during ten days I had enjoyed so many delights, I returned to the Bragadin Palace, where I read the following letter:

"You have somewhat offended me, my own darling, by telling me, respecting the mystery which I am bound to keep on the subject of my lover, that, satisfied to possess my heart, you left me mistress of my mind. That division of the heart and of the mind appears to me a pure sophism, and if it does not strike you as such you must admit that you do not love me wholly, for I

cannot exist without mind, and you cannot cherish my heart if it does not agree with my mind. If your love cannot accept a different state of things it does not excel in delicacy. However, as some circumstance might occur in which you might accuse me of not having acted towards you with all the sincerity that true love inspires, and that it has a right to demand, I have made up my mind to confide to you a secret which concerns my friend, although I am aware that he relies entirely upon my discretion. I shall certainly be guilty of a breach of confidence, but you will not love me less for it, because, compelled to choose between you two, and to deceive either one or the other, love has conquered friendship; do not punish me for it, for it has not been done blindly, and you will, I trust, consider the reasons which have caused the scale to weigh down in your favour.

"When I found myself incapable of resisting my wish to know you and to become intimate with you, I could not gratify that wish without taking my friend into my confidence, and I had no doubt of his compliance. He conceived a very favourable opinion of your character from your first letter, not only because you had chosen the parlour of the convent for our first interview, but also because you appointed his casino at Muran instead of your own. But he likewise begged of me to allow him to be present at our first meeting-place, in a small closet—a true hiding-place, from which one can see

and hear everything without being suspected by those in the drawing-room. You have not yet seen that mysterious closet, but I will shew it to you on the last day of the year. Tell me, dearest, whether I could refuse that singular request to the man who was shewing me such compliant kindness? I consented, and it was natural for me not to let you know it. You are therefore aware now that my friend was a witness of all we did and said during the first night that we spent together, but do not let that annoy you, for you pleased him in everything, in your behaviour towards me as well as in the witty sayings which you uttered to make me laugh. I was in great fear, when the conversation turned upon him, lest you would say something which might hurt his self-love, but, very fortunately, he heard only the most flattering compliments. Such is, dearest love, the sincere confession of my treason, but as a wise lover you will forgive me because it has not done you the slightest harm. My friend is extremely curious to ascertain who you are. But listen to me, that night you were natural and thoroughly amiable, would you have been the same, if you had known that there was a witness? It is not likely, and if I had acquainted you with the truth, you might have refused your consent, and perhaps you would have been right.

"Now, that we know each other, and that you entertain no doubt, I trust, of my devoted love, I

wish to ease my conscience and to venture all. Learn then, dearest, that on the last day of the year, my friend will be at the casino, which he will leave only the next morning. You will not see him, but he will see us. As you are supposed not to know anything about it, you must feel that you will have to be natural in everything, otherwise, he might guess that I have betrayed the secret. It is especially in your conversation that you must be careful. My friend possesses every virtue except the theological one called faith, and on that subject you can say anything you like. You will be at liberty to talk literature, travels, politics, anything you please, and you need not refrain from anecdotes. In fact you are certain of his approbation.

"Now, dearest, I have only this to say. Do you feel disposed to allow yourself to be seen by another man while you are abandoning yourself to the sweet voluptuousness of your senses? That doubt causes all my anxiety, and I entreat from you an answer, yes or no. Do you understand how painful the doubt is for me? I expect not to close my eyes throughout the night, and I shall not rest until I have your decision. In case you should object to shew your tenderness in the presence of a third person, I will take whatever determination love may suggest to me. But I hope you will consent, and even if you were not to perform the character of an ardent lover in a masterly manner, it would not be of any consequence. I will let my

friend believe that your love has not reached its apogee."

That letter certainly took me by surprise, but all things considered, thinking that my part was better than the one accepted by the lover, I laughed heartily at the proposal. I confess, however, that I should not have laughed if I had not known the nature of the individual who was to be the witness of my amorous exploits. Understanding all the anxiety of my friend, and wishing to allay it, I immediately wrote to her the following lines:

"You wish me, heavenly creature, to answer you yes or no, and I, full of love for you, want my answer to reach you before noon, so that you may dine in perfect peace.

"I will spend the last night of the year with you, and I can assure you that the friend, to whom we will give a spectacle worthy of Paphos and Amathos, shall see or hear nothing likely to make him suppose that I am acquainted with his secret. You may be certain that I will play my part not as a novice but as a master. If it is man's duty to be always the slave of his reason; if, as long as he has control over himself, he ought not to act without taking it for his guide, I cannot understand why a man should be ashamed to shew himself to a friend at the very moment that he is most favoured by love and nature.

"Yet I confess that you would have been wrong if you had confided the secret to me the first

time, and that most likely I should then have refused to grant you that mark of my compliance, not because I loved you less then than I do now, but there are such strange tastes in nature that I might have imagined that your lover's ruling taste was to enjoy the sight of an ardent and frantic couple in the midst of amorous connection, and in that case, conceiving an unfavourable opinion of you, vexation might have frozen the love you had just sent through my being. Now, however, the case is very different. I know all I possess in you, and, from all you have told me of your lover, I am well disposed towards him, and I believe him to be my friend. If a feeling of modesty does not deter you from shewing yourself tender, loving, and full of amorous ardour with me in his presence, how could I be ashamed, when, on the contrary, I ought to feel proud of myself? I have no reason to blush at having made a conquest of you, or at shewing myself in those moments during which I prove the liberality with which nature has bestowed upon me the shape and the strength which assure such immense enjoyment to me, besides the certainty that I can make the woman I love share it with me. I am aware that, owing to a feeling which is called natural, but which is perhaps only the result of civilization and the effect of the prejudices inherent in youth, most men object to any witness in those moments, but those who cannot give any good reasons for their repug-

nance must have in their nature something of the cat. At the same time, they might have some excellent reasons, without their thinking themselves bound to give them, except to the woman, who is easily deceived. I excuse with all my heart those who know that they would only excite the pity of the witnesses, but we both have no fear of that sort. All you have told me of your friend proves that he will enjoy our pleasures. But do you know what will be the result of it? The intensity of our ardour will excite his own, and he will throw himself at my feet, begging and entreating me to give up to him the only object likely to calm his amorous excitement. What could I do in that case? Give you up? I could hardly refuse to do so with good grace, but I would go away, for I could not remain a quiet spectator.

"Farewell, my darling love; all will be well, I have no doubt. Prepare yourself for the athletic contest, and rely upon the fortunate being who adores you."

I spent the six following days with my three worthy friends, and at the *ridotto,* which at that time was opened on St. Stephen's Day. As I could not hold the cards there, the partricians alone having the privilege of holding the bank, I played morning and evening, and I constantly lost; for whoever punts must lose. But the loss of the four or five thousand sequins I possessed, far from cooling my love, seemed only to increase its ardour.

At the end of the year 1774 the Great Council promulgated a law forbidding all games of chance, the first effect of which was to close the *ridotto*. This law was a real phenomenon, and when the votes were taken out of the urn the senators looked at each other with stupefaction. They had made the law unwittingly, for three-fourths of the voters objected to it, and yet three-fourths of the votes were in favour of it. People said that it was a miracle of St. Mark's, who had answered the prayers of Monsignor Flangini, then censor-in-chief, now cardinal, and one of the three State Inquisitors.

On the day appointed I was punctual at the place of rendezvous, and I had not to wait for my mistress. She was in the dressing-room, where she had had time to attend to her toilet, and as soon as she heard me she came to me dressed with the greatest elegance.

"My friend is not yet at his post," she said to me, "but the moment he is there I will give you a wink."

"Where is the mysterious closet?"

"There it is. Look at the back of this sofa against the wall. All those flowers in relief have a hole in the centre which communicates with the closet behind that wall. There is a bed, a table, and everything necessary to a person who wants to spend the night in amusing himself by looking at what is going on in this room. I will shew it to you whenever you like."

"Was it arranged by your lover's orders?"

"No, for he could not foresee that he would use it."

"I understand that he may find great pleasure in such a sight, but being unable to possess you at the very moment nature will make you most necessary to him, what will he do?"

"That is his business. Besides, he is at liberty to go away when he has had enough of it, or to sleep if he has a mind to, but if you play your part naturally he will not feel any weariness."

"I will be most natural, but I must be more polite."

"No, no politeness, I beg, for if you are polite, good-bye to nature. Where have you ever seen, I should like to know, two lovers, excited by all the fury of love, think of politeness?"

"You are right, darling, but I must be more delicate."

"Very well, delicacy can do no harm, but no more than usual. Your letter greatly pleased me, you have treated the subject like a man of experience."

I have already stated that my mistress was dressed most elegantly, but I ought to have added that it was the elegance of the Graces, and that it did not in any way prevent ease and simplicity. I only wondered at her having used some paint for the face, but it rather pleased me because she had applied it according to the fashion of the ladies of

Versailles. The charm of that style consists in the negligence with which the paint is applied. The rouge must not appear natural; it is used to please the eyes which see in it the marks of an intoxication heralding the most amorous fury. She told me that she had put some on her face to please her inquisitive friend, who was very fond of it.

"That taste," I said, "proves him to be a Frenchman."

As I was uttering these words, she made a sign to me; the friend was at his post, and now the play began.

"The more I look at you, beloved angel, the more I think you worthy of my adoration."

"But are you not certain that you do not worship a cruel divinity?"

"Yes, and therefore I do not offer my sacrifices to appease you, but to excite you. You shall feel all through the night the ardour of my devotion."

"You will not find me insensible to your offerings."

"I would begin them at once, but I think that, in order to insure their efficiency, we ought to have supper first. I have taken nothing to-day but a cup of chocolate and a salad of whites of eggs dressed with oil from Lucca and Marseilles vinegar."

"But, dearest, it is folly! you must be ill?"

"Yes, I am just now, but I shall be all right

when I have distilled the whites of eggs, one by one, into your amorous soul."

"I did not think you required any such stimulants."

"Who could want any with you? But I have a rational fear, for if I happened to prime without being able to fire, I would blow my brains out."

"My dear browny, it would certainly be a misfortune, but there would be no occasion to be in despair on that account."

"You think that I would only have to prime again."

"Of course."

While we were bantering in this edifying fashion, the table had been laid, and we sat down to supper. She ate for two and I for four, our excellent appetite being excited by the delicate cheer. A sumptuous dessert was served in splendid silver-gilt plate, similar to the two candlesticks which held four wax candles each. Seeing that I admired them, she said:

"They are a present from my friend."

"It is a magnificent present, has he given you the snuffers likewise?"

"No."

"It is a proof that your friend is a great nobleman."

"How so?"

"Because great lords have no idea of snuffing the candle."

"Our candles have wicks which never require that operation."

"Good! Tell me who has taught you French."

"Old La Forest. I have been his pupil for six years. He has also taught me to write poetry, but you know a great many words which I never heard from him, such as *à gogo, frustratoire, rater, dorloter*. Who taught you these words?"

"The good company in Paris, and women particularly."

We made some punch, and amused ourselves in eating oysters after the voluptuous fashion of lovers. We sucked them in, one by one, after placing them on the other's tongue. Voluptuous reader, try it, and tell me whether it is not the nectar of the gods!

At last, joking was over, and I reminded her that we had to think of more substantial pleasures. "Wait here," she said, "I am going to change my dress. I shall be back in one minute." Left alone, and not knowing what to do, I looked in the drawers of her writing-table. I did not touch the letters, but finding a box full of certain preservative sheaths against the fatal and dreaded plumpness, I emptied it, and I placed in it the following lines instead of the stolen goods:

Enfants de l'Amitié, ministres de la Peur,
Je suis l'Amour, tremblez, respectez le voleur!
Et toi, femme de Dieu, ne crains pas d'être mère;
Car si tu le deviens, Dieu seul sera le père.

S'il est dit cependant que tu veux le barrer,
Parle; je suis tout prêt, je me ferai châtrer.

My mistress soon returned, dressed like a nymph. A gown of Indian muslin, embroidered with gold lilies, shewed to admiration the outline of her voluptuous form, and her fine lace-cap was worthy of a queen. I threw myself at her feet, entreating her not to delay my happiness any longer.

"Control your ardour a few moments," she said, "here is the altar, and in a few minutes the victim will be in your arms."

"You will see," she added, going to her writing-table, "how far the delicacy and the kind attention of my friend can extend."

She took the box and opened it, but instead of the pretty sheaths that she expected to see, she found my poetry. After reading it aloud, she called me a thief, and smothering me with kisses she entreated me to give her back what I had stolen, but I pretended not to understand. She then read the lines again, considered for one moment, and under pretence of getting a better pen, she left the room, saying,—

"I am going to pay you in your own coin."

She came back after a few minutes and wrote the following six lines:

Sans rien ôter au plaisir amoureux,
L'objet de ton larcin sert à combler nos vœux.
A l' abri du danger, mon âme satisfaite

Savoure en sûreté parfaite;
Et si tu veux jouir avec sécurité,
Rends-moi, mon doux ami, ces dons de l'amitié.

After this I could not resist any longer, and I gave her back those objects so precious to a nun who wants to sacrifice on the altar of Venus.

The clock striking twelve, I shewed her the principal actor who was longing to perform, and she arranged the sofa, saying that the alcove being too cold we had better sleep on it. But the true reason was that, to satisfy the curious lover, it was necessary for us to be seen.

Dear reader, a picture must have shades, and there is nothing, no matter how beautiful in one point of view, that does not require to be sometimes veiled if you look at it from a different one. In order to paint the diversified scene which took place between me and my lovely mistress until the dawn of day, I should have to use all the colours of Aretino's palette. I was ardent and full of vigour, but I had to deal with a strong partner, and in the morning, after the last exploit, we were positively worn out; so much so that my charming nun felt some anxiety on my account. It is true that she had seen my blood spirt out and cover her bosom during my last offering; and as she did not suspect the true cause of that phenomenon, she turned pale with fright. I allayed her anxiety by a thousand follies which made her laugh heartily. I washed her splendid bosom with rose-water, so as to purify

it from the blood by which it had been dyed for the first time. She expressed a fear that she had swallowed a few drops, but I told her that it was of no consequence, even if it were the case. She resumed the costume of a nun, and entreating me to lie down and to write to her before returning to Venice, so as to let her know how I was, she left the casino.

I had no difficulty in obeying her, for I was truly in great need of rest. I slept until evening. As soon as I awoke, I worte to her that my health was excellent, and that I felt quite inclined to begin our delightful contest all over again. I asked her to let me know how she was herself, and after I had dispatched my letter I returned to Venice.

CHAPTER II

I GIVE MY PORTRAIT TO M. M.—A PRESENT FROM HER—I GO TO THE OPERA WITH HER—SHE PLAYS AT THE FARO-TABLE AND REPLENISHES MY EMPTY PURSE—PHILOSOPHICAL CONVERSATION WITH M. M. —A LETTER FROM C. C.—SHE KNOWS ALL— A BALL AT THE CONVENT; MY EXPLOITS IN THE CHARACTER OF PIERROT—C. C. COMES TO THE CASINO INSTEAD OF M. M.—I SPEND THE NIGHT WITH HER IN A VERY SILLY WAY.

My dear M—— M—— had expressed a wish to have my portrait, something like the one I had given to C—— C——, only larger, to wear it as a locket. The outside was to represent some saint, and an invisible spring was to remove the sainted picture and expose my likeness. I called upon the artist who had painted the other miniature for me, and in three sittings I had what I wanted. He afterwards made for me an Annunciation, in which the angel Gabriel was transformed into a dark-haired saint, and the Holy Virgin into a beautiful, light-complexioned woman holding her arms towards

the angel. The celebrated painter Mengs imitated that idea in the picture of the Annunciation which he painted in Madrid twelve years afterwards, but I do not know whether he had the same reasons for it as my painter. That allegory was exactly of the same size as my portrait, and the jeweller who made the locket arranged it in such a manner that no one could suppose the sacred image to be there only for the sake of hiding a profane likeness.

The 2nd of January, 1754, before going to the casino, I called upon Laura to give her a letter for C—— C——, and she handed me one from her which amused me. My beautiful nun had initiated that young girl, not only into the mysteries of Sappho, but also in high metaphysics, and C—— C—— had consequently become a Free-thinker. She wrote to me that, objecting to give an account of her affairs to her confessor, and yet not wishing to tell him falsehoods, she had made up her mind to tell him nothing.

"He has remarked," she added, "that perhaps I do not confess anything to him because I did not examine my conscience sufficiently, and I answered him that I had nothing to say, but that if he liked I would commit a few sins for the purpose of having something to tell him in confession."

I thought this reply worthy of a thorough sophist, and laughed heartily.

On the same day I received the following letter from my adorable nun:

"I write to you from my bed, dearest browny, because I cannot remain standing on my feet. I am almost dead. But I am not anxious about it; a little rest will make me all right, for I eat well and sleep soundly. You have made me very happy by writing to me that your bleeding has not had any evil consequences, and I give you fair notice that I shall have the proof of it on Twelfth Night, at least if you like; that is understood, and you will let me know. In case you should feel disposed to grant me that favour, my darling, I wish to go to the opera. At all events, recollect that I positively forbid the whites of eggs for the future, for I would rather have a little less enjoyment and more security respecting your health. In future, when you go to the casino of Muran, please to enquire whether there is anybody there, and if you receive an affirmative answer, go away. My friend will do the same. In that manner you will not run the risk of meeting one another, but you need not observe these precautions for long, if you wish, for my friend is extremely fond of you, and has a great desire to make your acquaintance. He has told me that, if he had not seen it with his own eyes, he never would have believed that a man could run the race that you ran so splendidly the other night, but he says that, by making love in that manner, you bid defiance to death, for he is certain that the blood you lost comes from the brain. But what

will he say when he hears that you only laugh at the occurrence? I am going to make you very merry: he wants to eat the salad of whites of eggs, and he wants me to ask you for some of your vinegar, because there is none in Venice. He said that he spent a delightful night, in spite of his fear of the evil consequences of our amorous sport, and he has found my own efforts superior to the usual weakness of my sex. That may be the case, dearest browny, but I am delighted to have done such wonders, and to have made such trial of my strength. Without you, darling of my heart, I should have lived without knowing myself, and I wonder whether it is possible for nature to create a woman who could remain insensible in your arms, or rather one who would not receive new life by your side. It is more than love that I feel for you, it is idolatry; and my mouth, longing to meet yours, sends forth thousands of kisses which are wasted in the air. I am panting for your divine portrait, so as to quench by a sweet illusion the fire which devours my amorous lips. I trust my likeness will prove equally dear to you, for it seems to me that nature has created us for one another, and I curse the fatal instant in which I raised an invincible barrier between us. You will find enclosed the key of my bureau. Open it, and take a parcel on which you will see written, "For my darling" It is a small present which my friend wishes me to offer you in ex-

change for the beautiful night-cap that you gave me. Adieu."

The small key enclosed in the letter belonged to a bureau in the boudoir. Anxious to know the nature of the present that she could offer me at the instance of her friend, I opened the bureau, and found a parcel containing a letter and a morocco-leather case.

The letter was as follows:

"That which will, I hope, render this present dear to you is the portrait of a woman who adores you. Our friend had two of them, but the great friendship he entertains towards you has given him the happy idea of disposing of one in your favour. This box contains two portraits of me, which are to be seen in two different ways: if you take off the bottom part of the case in its length, you will see me as a nun; and if you press on the corner, the top will open and expose me to your sight in a state of nature. It is not possible, dearest, that a woman can ever have loved you as I do. Our friend excites my passion by the flattering opinion that he entertains of you. I cannot decide whether I am more fortunate in my friend or in my lover, for I could not imagine any being superior to either one or the other."

The case contained a gold snuff-box, and a small quantity of Spanish snuff which had been left in it proved that it had been used. I followed the instructions given in the letter, and I first saw

my mistress in the costume of a nun, standing and in half profile. The second secret spring brought her before my eyes, entirely naked, lying on a mattress of black satin, in the position of the Madeleine of Coreggio. She was looking at Love, who had the quiver at his feet, and was gracefully sitting on the nun's robes. It was such a beautiful present that I did not think myself worthy of it. I wrote to M—— M—— a letter in which the deepest gratitude was blended with the most exalted love. The drawers of the bureau contained all her diamonds and four purses full of sequins. I admired her noble confidence in me. I locked the bureau, leaving everything undisturbed, and returned to Venice. If I had been able to escape out of the capricious clutches of fortune by giving up gambling, my happiness would have been complete.

My own portrait was set with rare perfection, and as it was arranged to be worn round the neck I attached it to six yards of Venetian chain, which made it a very handsome present. The secret was in the ring to which it was suspended, and it was very difficult to discover it. To make the spring work and expose my likeness it was necessary to pull the ring with some force and in a peculiar manner. Otherwise, nothing could be seen but the Annunciation, and it was then a beautiful ornament for a nun.

On Twelfth Night, having the locket and

chain in my pocket, I went early in the evening to watch near the fine statue erected to the hero Colleoni after he had been poisoned, if history does not deceive us. *Sit divus, modo non vivus,* is a sentence from the enlightened monarch, which will last as long as there are monarchs on earth.

At six o'clock precisely my mistress alighted from the gondola, well dressed and well masked, but this time in the garb of a woman. We went to the Saint Samuel Opera, and after the second ballet we repaired to the *ridotto,* where she amused herself by looking at all the ladies of the nobility who alone had the right to walk about without masks. After rambling about for half an hour, we entered the hall where the bank was held. She stopped before the table of M. Mocenigo, who at that time was the best amongst all the noble gamblers. As nobody was playing, he was carelessly whispering to a masked lady, whom I recognized as Madame Marina Pitani, whose adorer he was.

M—— M—— enquired whether I wanted to play, and as I answered in the negative she said to me,—

"I take you for my partner."

And without waiting for my answer she took a purse, and placed a pile of gold on a card. The banker without disturbing himself shuffled the cards, turned them up, and my friend won the paroli. The banker paid, took another pack of

cards, and continued his conversation with his lady, shewing complete indifference for four hundred sequins which my friend had already placed on the same card. The banker continuing his conversations, M—— M—— said to me, in excellent French,—

"Our stakes are not high enough to interest this gentleman; let us go."

I took up the gold, which I put in my pocket, without answering M. de Mocenigo, who said to me:

"Your mask is too exacting."

I rejoined my lovely gambler, who was surrounded. We stopped soon afterwards before the bank of M. Pierre Marcello, a charming young man, who had near him Madame Vénier, sister of the patrician Momolo. My mistress began to play, and lost five rouleaux of gold one after the other. Having no more money, she took handfuls of gold from my pocket, and in four or five deals she broke the bank. She went away, and the noble banker, bowing, complimented her upon her good fortune. After I had taken care of all the gold she had won, I gave her my arm, and we left the *ridotto,* but remarking that a few inquisitive persons were following us, I took a gondola which landed us according to my instructions. One can always escape prying eyes in this way in Venice.

After supper I counted our winnings, and I

found myself in possession of one thousand sequins as my share. I rolled the remainder in paper, and my friend asked me to put it in her bureau. I then took my locket and threw it over her neck; it gave her the greatest delight, and she tried for a long time to discover the secret. At last I shewed it her, and she pronounced my portrait an excellent likeness.

Recollecting that we had but three hours to devote to the pleasures of love, I entreated her to allow me to turn them to good account.

"Yes," she said, "but be prudent, for our friend pretends that you might die on the spot."

"And why does he not fear the same danger for you, when your ecstacies are in reality much more frequent than mine?"

"He says that the liquor distilled by us women does not come from the brain, as is the case with men, and that the generating parts of woman have no contact with her intellect. The consequence of it, he says, is that the child is not the offspring of the mother as far as the brain, the seat of reason, is concerned, but of the father, and it seems to me very true. In that important act the woman has scarcely the amount of reason that she is in need of, and she cannot have any left to enable her to give a dose to the being she is generating."

"Your friend is a very learned man. But do you know that such a way of arguing opens my

eyes singularly? It is evident that, if that system be true, women ought to be forgiven for all the follies which they commit on account of love, whilst man is inexcusable, and I should be in despair if I happened to place you in a position to become a mother."

"I shall know before long, and if it should be the case so much the better. My mind is made up, and my decision taken."

"And what is that decision?"

"To abandon my destiny entirely to you both. I am quite certain that neither one nor the other would let me remain at the convent."

"It would be a fatal event which would decide our future destinies. I would carry you off, and take you to England to marry you."

"My friend thinks that a physician might be bought, who, under the pretext of some disease of his own invention, would prescribe to me to go somewhere to drink the waters—a permission which the bishop might grant. At the watering-place I would get cured, and come back here, but I would much rather unite our destinies for ever. Tell me, dearest, could you manage to live anywhere as comfortably as you do here?"

"Alas! my love, no, but with you how could I be unhappy? But we will resume that subject whenever it may be necessary. Let us go to bed."

"Yes. If I have a son my friend wishes to act towards him as a father."

"Would he believe himself to be the father?"

"You might both of you believe it, but some likeness would soon enlighten me as to which of you two was the true father."

"Yes. If, for instance, the child composed poetry, then you would suppose that he was the son of your friend."

"How do you know that my friend can write poetry?"

"Admit that he is the author of the six lines which you wrote in answer to mine."

"I cannot possibly admit such a falsehood, because, good or bad, they were of my own making, and so as to leave you no doubt let me convince you of it at once."

"Oh, never mind! I believe you, and let us go to bed, or Love will call out the god of Parnassus."

"Let him do it, but take this pencil and write; I am Apollo, you may be Love:"

Je ne me battrai pas; je te céde la place.
Si Vénus est ma sœur, l'Amour est de ma race.
Je sais faire des vers. Un instant de perdu
N'offense pas l'Amour, si je l'ai convaincu.

"It is on my knees that I entreat your pardon, my heavenly friend, but how could I expect so much talent in a young daughter of Venice, only twenty-two years of age, and, above all, brought up in a convent?"

"I have a most insatiate desire to prove

myself more and more worthy of you. Did you think I was prudent at the gaming-table?"

"Prudent enough to make the most intrepid banker tremble."

"I do not always play so well, but I had taken you as a partner, and I felt I could set fortune at defiance. Why would you not play?"

"Because I had lost four thousand sequins last week and I was without money, but I shall play to-morrow, and fortune will smile upon me. In the mean time, here is a small book which I have brought from your boudoir: the postures of Pietro Aretino; I want to try some of them."

"The thought is worthy of you, but some of these positions could not be executed, and others are insipid."

"True, but I have chosen four very interesting ones."

These delightful labours occupied the remainder of the night until the alarum warned us that it was time to part. I accompanied my lovely nun as far as her gondola, and then went to bed, but I could not sleep. I got up in order to go and pay a few small debts, for one of the greatest pleasures that a spendthrift can enjoy is, in my opinion, to discharge certain liabilities. The gold won by my mistress proved lucky for me, for I did not pass a single day of the carnival without winning.

Three days after Twelfth Night, having paid a

visit to the casino of Muran for the purpose of placing some gold in M—— M——'s bureau, the door-keeper handed me a letter from my nun. Laura had, a few minutes before, delivered me one from C—— C——.

My new mistress, after giving me an account of her health, requested me to enquire from my jeweller whether he had not by chance made a ring having on its bezel a St. Catherine which, without a doubt, concealed another portrait; she wished to know the secret of that ring. "A young boarder," she added, "a lovely girl, and my friend, is the owner of that ring. There must be a secret, but she does not know it." I answered that I would do what she wished. But here is the letter of C—— C——. It was rather amusing, because it placed me in a regular dilemma; it bore a late date, but the letter of M—— M—— had been written two days before it.

"Ah! how truly happy I am, my beloved husband! You love Sister M—— M——, my dear friend. She has a locket as big as a ring, and she cannot have received it from anyone but you. I am certain that your dear likeness is to be found under the Annunciation. I recognized the style of the artist, and it is certainly the same who painted the locket and my ring. I am satisfied that Sister M—— M—— has received that present from you. I am so pleased to know all that I would not run the risk of grieving her by telling her that I knew

her secret, but my dear friend, either more open or more curious, has not imitated my reserve. She told me that she had no doubt of my St. Catherine concealing the portrait of my lover. Unable to say anything better, I told her that the ring was in reality a gift from my lover, but that I had no idea of his portrait being concealed inside of it. 'If it is as you say,' observed M—— M——, 'and if you have no objection, I will try to find out the secret, and afterwards I will let you know mine.' Being quite certain that she would not discover it, I gave her my ring, saying that, if she could find out the secret, I should be very much pleased.

"Just as that moment my aunt paid me a visit, and I left my ring in the hands of M—— M——, who returned it to me after dinner, assuring me that, although she had not been able to find out the secret, she was certain there was one. I promise you that she shall never hear anything about it from me, because if she saw your portait, she would guess everything, and then I should have to tell her who you are. I am sorry to be compelled to conceal anything from her, but I am very glad you love one another. I pity you both, however, with all my heart, because I know that you are obliged to make love through a grating in that horrid parlour. How I wish, dearest, I could give you my place! I would make two persons happy at the same time! Adieu!"

I answered that she had guessed rightly, that the locket of her friend was a present from me and contained my likeness, but that she was to keep the secret, and to be certain that my friendship for M—— M—— interfered in no way with the feeling which bound me to her for ever. I certainly was well aware that I was not behaving in a straightforward manner, but I endeavoured to deceive myself, so true it is that a woman, weak as she is, has more influence by the feeling she inspires than man can possibly have with all his strength. At all events, I was foolishly trying to keep up an intrigue which I knew to be near its *dénouement* through the intimacy that had sprung up between these two friendly rivals.

Laura having informed me that there was to be on a certain day a ball in the large parlour of the convent, I made up my mind to attend it in such a disguise that my two friends could not recognize me. I decided upon the costume of a Pierrot, because it conceals the form and the gait better than any other. I was certain that my two friends would be behind the grating, and that it would afford me the pleasant opportunity of seeing them together and of comparing them.

In Venice, during the carnival, that innocent pleasure is allowed in convents. The guests dance in the parlour, and the sisters remain behind the grating, enjoying the sight of the ball, which is over by sunset. Then all the guests retire, and

the poor nuns are for a long time happy in the recollection of the pleasure enjoyed by their eyes. The ball was to take place in the afternoon of the day appointed for my meeting with M—— M——, in the evening at the casino of Muran, but that could not prevent me from going to the ball; besides, I wanted to see my dear C—— C——.

I have said before that the dress of a Pierrot is the costume which disguises the figure and the gait most completely. It has also the advantage, through a large cap, of concealing the hair, and the white gauze which covers the face does not allow the colour of the eyes or of the eyebrows to be seen, but in order to prevent the costume from hindering the movements of the mask, he must not wear anything underneath, and in winter a dress made of light calico is not particularly agreeable. I did not, however, pay any attention to that, and taking only a plate of soup I went to Muran in a gondola. I had no cloak, and in my pockets I had nothing but my handkerchief, my purse, and the key of the casino.

I went at once to the convent. The parlour was full, but thanks to my costume of Pierrot, which was seen in Venice but very seldom, everybody made room for me. I walked on, assuming the gait of a booby, the true characteristic of my costume, and I stopped near the dancers. After I had examined the Pantaloons, Punches, Harlequins, and Merry Andrews, I went near the grating.

where I saw all the nuns and boarders, some seated, some standing, and, without appearing to notice any of them in particular, I remarked my two friends together, and very intent upon the dancers. I then walked round the room, eyeing everybody from head to foot, and calling the general attention upon myself.

I chose for my partner in the minuet a pretty girl dressed as a Columbine, and I took her hand in so awkward a manner and with such an air of stupidity that everybody laughed and made room for us. My partner danced very well according to her costume, and I kept my character with such perfection that the laughter was general. After the minuet I danced twelve forlanas with the greatest vigour. Out of breath, I threw myself on a sofa, pretending to go to sleep, and the moment I began to snore everybody respected the slumbers of Pierrot. The quadrille lasted one hour, and I took no part in it, but immediately after it, a Harlequin approached me with the impertinence which belongs to his costume, and flogged me with his wand. It is Harlequin's weapon. In my quality of Pierrot I had no weapons. I seized him round the waist and carried him round the parlour, running all the time, while he kept on flogging me. I then put him down. Adroitly snatching his wand out of his hand, I lifted his Columbine on my shoulders, and pursued him, striking him with the wand, to the great delight and mirth of the

company. The Columbine was screaming because she was afraid of my tumbling down and of shewing her centre of gravity to everybody in the fall. She had good reason to fear, for suddenly a foolish Merry Andrew came behind me, tripped me up, and down I tumbled. Everybody hooted Master Punch. I quickly picked myself up, and rather vexed I began a regular fight with the insolent fellow. He was of my size, but awkward, and he had nothing but strength. I threw him, and shaking him vigorously on all sides I contrived to deprive him of his hump and false stomach. The nuns, who had never seen such a merry sight, clapped their hands, everybody laughed loudly, and improving my opportunity I ran through the crowd and disappeared.

I was in a perspiration, and the weather was cold; I threw myself into a gondola, and in order not to get chilled I landed at the *ridotto*. I had two hours to spare before going to the casino of Muran, and I longed to enjoy the astonishment of my beautiful nun when she saw M. Pierrot standing before her. I spent those two hours in playing at all the banks, winning, losing, and performing all sorts of antics with complete freedom, being satisfied that no one could recognize me; enjoying the present, bidding defiance to the future, and laughing at all those reasonable beings who exercise their reason to avoid the misfortunes which they

fear, destroying at the same time the pleasure that they might enjoy.

But two o'clock struck and gave me warning that Love and Comus were calling me to bestow new delights upon me. With my pockets full of gold and silver, I left the *ridotto,* hurried to Muran, entered the sanctuary, and saw my divinity leaning against the mantelpiece. She wore her convent dress. I come near her by stealth, in order to enjoy her surprise. I look at her, and I remain petrified, astounded.

The person I see is not M—— M——.

It is C—— C——, dressed as a nun, who, more astonished even than myself, does not utter one word or make a movement. I throw myself in an arm-chair in order to breathe and to recover from my surprise. The sight of C—— C—— had annihilated me, and my mind was as much stupefied as my body. I found myself in an inextricable maze.

It is M—— M——, I said to myself, who has played that trick upon me, but how has she contrived to know that I am the lover of C—— C——? Has C—— C—— betrayed my secret? But if she has betrayed it, how could M—— M—— deprive herself of the pleasure of seeing me, and consent to her place being taken by her friend and rival? That cannot be a mark of kind compliance, for a woman never carries it to such an extreme. I see in it only a mark of contempt—a gratuitous insult.

My self-love tried hard to imagine some reason

likely to disprove the possibility of that contempt, but in vain. Absorbed in that dark discontent, I believed myself wantonly trifled with, deceived, despised, and I spent half an hour silent and gloomy, staring at C—— C——, who scarcely dared to breathe, perplexed, confused, and not knowing in whose presence she was, for she could only know me as the Pierrot whom she had seen at the ball.

Deeply in love with M—— M——, and having come to the casino only for her, I did not feel disposed to accept the exchange, although I was very far from despising C—— C——, whose charms were as great, at least, as those of M—— M——. I loved her tenderly, I adored her, but at that moment it was not her whom I wanted, because at first her presence had struck me as a mystification. It seemed to me that if I celebrated the return of C—— C—— in an amorous manner, I would fail in what I owed to myself, and I thought that I was bound in honour not to lend myself to the imposition. Besides, without exactly realizing that feeling, I was not sorry to have it in my power to reproach M—— M—— with an indifference very strange in a woman in love, and I wanted to act in such a manner that she should not be able to say that she had procured me a pleasure. I must add that I suspected M—— M—— to be hiding in the secret closet, perhaps with her friend.

I had to take a decision, for I could not pass

the whole night in my costume of Pierrot, and without speaking. At first I thought of going away, the more so that both C—— C—— and her friend could not be certain that I and Pierrot were the same individual, but I soon abandoned the idea with horror, thinking of the deep sorrow which would fill the loving soul of C—— C—— if she ever heard I was the Pierrot. I almost fancied that she knew it already, and I shared the grief which she evidently would feel in that case. I had seduced her. I had given her the right to call me her husband. These thoughts broke my heart.

If M—— M—— is in the closet, said I to myself, she will shew herself in good time. With that idea, I took off the gauze which covered my features. My lovely C—— C—— gave a deep sigh, and said,—

"I breathe again! it could not be anyone but you, my heart felt it. You seemed surprised when you saw me, dearest; did you not know that I was waiting for you?"

"I had not the faintest idea of it."

"If you are angry, I regret it deeply, but I am innocent."

"My adored friend, come to my arms, and never suppose that I can be angry with you. I am delighted to see you; you are always my dear wife: but I entreat you to clear up a cruel doubt, for you could never have betrayed my secret."

"I! I would never have been guilty of such a thing, even if death had stared me in the face."

"Then, how did you come here? How did your friend contrive to discover everything? No one but you could tell her that I am your husband. Laura perhaps. . . ."

"No, Laura is faithful, dearest, and I cannot guess how it was."

"But how could you be persuaded to assume that disguise, and to come here? You can leave the convent, and you have never apprised me of that important circumstance."

"Can you suppose that I would not have told you all about it, if I had ever left the convent, even once? I came out of it two hours ago, for the first time, and I was induced to take that step in the simplest, the most natural manner."

"Tell me all about it, my love. I feel extremely curious."

"I am glad of it, and I would conceal nothing from you. You know how dearly M—— M—— and I love each other. No intimacy could be more tender than ours; you can judge of it by what I told you in my letters. Well, two days ago, my dear friend begged the abbess and my aunt to allow me to sleep in her room in the place of the lay-sister, who, having a very bad cold, had carried her cough to the infirmary. The permission was granted. and you cannot imagine our pleasure in seeing ourselves at liberty,

for the first time, to sleep in the same bed. To-day, shortly after you had left the parlour, where you so much amused us, without our discovering that the delightful Pierrot was our friend, my dear M—— M—— retired to her room and I followed her. The moment we were alone she told me that she wanted me to render her a service from which depended our happiness. I need not tell you how readily I answered that she had only to name it. Then she opened a drawer, and much to my surprise she dressed me in this costume. She was laughing, and I did the same without suspecting the end of the joke. When she saw me entirely metamorphosed into a nun, she told me that she was going to trust me with a great secret, but that she entertained no fear of my discretion. 'Let me tell you, dearest friend,' she said to me, 'that I was on the point of going out of the convent, to return only to-morrow morning. I have, however, just decided that you shall go instead. You have nothing to fear and you do not require any instructions, because I know that you will meet with no difficulty. In an hour, a lay-sister will come here, I will speak a few words apart to her, and she will tell you to follow her. You will go out with her through the small gate and across the garden as far as the room leading out to the low shore. There you will get into the gondola, and say to the gondolier these

words: 'To the casino.' You will reach it in five minutes; you will step out and enter a small apartment, where you will find a good fire; you will be alone, and you will wait.' 'For whom?' I enquired. 'For nobody. You need not know any more: you may only be certain that nothing unpleasant will happen to you; trust me for that. You will sup at the casino, and sleep, if you like, without being disturbed. Do not ask any questions, for I cannot answer them.' Such is, my dear husband, the whole truth. Tell me now what I could do after that speech of my friend, and after she had received my promise to do whatever she wished. Do not distrust what I tell you, for my lips cannot utter a falsehood. I laughed, and not expecting anything else but an agreeable adventure, I followed the lay-sister and soon found myself here. After a tedious hour of expectation, Pierrot made his appearance. Be quite certain that the very moment I saw you my heart knew who it was, but a minute after I felt as if the lightning had struck me when I saw you step back, for I saw clearly enough that you did not expect to find me. Your gloomy silence frightened me, and I would never have dared to be the first in breaking it; the more so that, in spite of the feelings of my heart, I might have been mistaken. The dress of Pierrot might conceal some other man, but certainly no one that I could have seen in this place without horror. Recollect that for the last eight

months I have been deprived of the happiness of kissing you, and now that you must be certain of my innocence, allow me to congratulate you upon knowing this casino. You are happy, and I congratulate you with all my heart. M—— M—— is, after me, the only woman worthy of your love, the only one with whom I could consent to share it. I used to pity you, but I do so no longer, and your happiness makes me happy. Kiss me now."

I should have been very ungrateful, I should even have been cruel, if I had not then folded in my arms with the warmth of true love the angel of goodness and beauty who was before me, thanks to the most wonderful effort of friendship.

After assuring her that I no longer entertained any doubt of her innocence, I told her that I thought the behaviour of her friend very ambiguous. I said that, notwithstanding the pleasure I felt in seeing her, the trick played upon me by her friend was a very bad one, that it could not do otherwise than displease me greatly, because it was an insult to me.

"I am not of your opinion," replied C—— C——. "My dear M—— M—— has evidently contrived, somehow or other, to discover that, before you were acquainted with her, you were my lover. She thought very likely that you still loved me, and she imagined, for I know her well, that she could not give us a greater proof of her love than by procuring us, without forewarning us,

that which two lovers fond of each other must wish for so ardently. She wished to make us happy, and I cannot be angry with her for it."

"You are right to think so, dearest, but my position is very different from yours. You have not another lover; you could not have another; but I being free and unable to see you, have not found it possible to resist the charms of M—— M——. I love her madly; she knows it, and, intelligent as she is, she must have meant to shew her contempt for me by doing what she has done. I candidly confess that I feel hurt in the highest degree. If she loved me as I love her, she never could have sent you here instead of coming herself."

"I do not think so, my beloved friend. Her soul is as noble as her heart is generous; and just in the same manner that I am not sorry to know that you love one another and that you make each other happy, as this beautiful casino proves to me, she does not regret our love, and she is, on the contrary, delighted to shew us that she approves of it. Most likely she meant to prove that she loved you for your own sake, that your happiness makes her happy, and that she is not jealous of her best friend being her rival. To convince you that you ought not to be angry with her for having discovered our secret, she proves, by sending me here in her place, that she is pleased to see your heart divided between her and me. You know very well

that she loves me, and that I am often either her wife or her husband, and as you do not object to my being your rival and making her often as happy as I can, she does not want you either to suppose that her love is like hatred, for the love of a jealous heart is very much like it."

"You plead the cause of your friend with the eloquence of an angel, but, dear little wife, you do not see the affair in its proper light. You have intelligence and a pure soul, but you have not my experience. M—— M——'s love for me has been nothing but a passing fancy, and she knows that I am not such an idiot as to be deceived by all this affair. I am miserable, and it is her doing."

"Then I should be right if I complained of her also, because she makes me feel that she is the mistress of my lover, and she shews me that, after seducing him from me, she gives him back to me without difficulty. Then she wishes me to understand that she despises also my tender affection for her, since she places me in a position to shew that affection for another person."

"Now, dearest, you speak without reason, for the relations between you two are of an entirely different nature. Your mutual love is nothing but trifling nonsense—a mere illusion of the senses. The pleasures which you enjoy together are not exclusive. To become jealous of one another it would be necessary that one of you two should feel a similar affection for another woman: but M——

M—— could no more be angry at your having a lover than you could be so yourself if she had one; provided, however, that the lover should not belong to the other."

"But that is precisely our case, and you are mistaken. We are not angry at your loving us both equally. Have I not written to you that I would most willingly give you my place near M—— M——? Then you must believe that I despise you likewise?"

"My darling, that wish of yours to give me up your place, when you did not know that I was happy with M—— M——, arose from your friendship rather than from your love, and for the present I must be glad to see that your friendship is stronger than your love, but I have every reason to be sorry when M—— M—— feels the same. I love her without any possibility of marrying her. Do you understand me, dearest? As for you, knowing that you must be my wife, I am certain of our love, which practice will animate with new life. It is not the same with M—— M——; that love cannot spring up again into existence. Is it not humiliating for me to have inspired her with nothing but a passing fancy? I understand your adoration for her very well. She has initiated you into all her mysteries, and you owe her eternal friendship and everlasting gratitude."

It was midnight, and we went on wasting our time in this desultory conversation, when the

prudent and careful servant brought us an excellent supper. I could not touch anything, my heart was too full, but my dear little wife supped with a good appetite. I could not help laughing when I saw a salad of whites of eggs, and C—— C—— thought it extraordinary because all the yolks had been removed. In her innocence, she could not understand the intention of the person who had ordered the supper. As I looked at her, I was compelled to acknowledge that she had improved in beauty; in fact C—— C—— was remarkably beautiful, yet I remained cold by her side. I have always thought that there is no merit in being faithful to the person we truly love.

Two hours before day-light we resumed our seats near the fire, and C—— C——, seeing how dull I was, was delicately attentive to me. She attempted no allurement, all her movements wore the stamp of the most decent reserve, and her conversation, tender in its expressions and perfectly easy, never conveyed the shadow of a reproach for my coolness.

Towards the end of our long conversation, she asked me what she should say to her friend on her return to the convent.

"My dear M—— M—— expects to see me full of joy and gratitude for the generous present she thought she was making me by giving me this night, but what shall I tell her?"

"The whole truth. Do not keep from her a

single word of our conversation, as far as your memory will serve you, and tell her especially that she has made me miserable for a long time."

"No, for I should cause her too great a sorrow; she loves you dearly, and cherishes the locket which contains your likeness. I mean, on the contrary, to do all I can to bring peace between you two, and I must succeed before long, because my friend is not guilty of any wrong, and you only feel some spite, although with no cause. I will send you my letter by Laura, unless you promise me to go and fetch it yourself at her house."

"Your letters will always be dear to me, but, mark my words, M—— M—— will not enter into any explanation. She will believe you in everything, except in one."

"I suppose you mean our passing a whole night together as innocently as if we were brother and sister. If she knows you as well as I do, she will indeed think it most wonderful."

"In that case, you may tell her the contrary, if you like."

"Nothing of the sort. I hate falsehoods, and I will certainly never utter one in such a case as this; it would be very wrong. I do not love you less on that account, my darling, although, during this long night, you have not condescended to give me the slightest proof of your love."

"Believe me, dearest, I am sick from unhappi-

ness. I love you with my whole soul, but I am in such a situation that. . . ."

"What! you are weeping, my love! Oh! I entreat you, spare my heart! I am so sorry to have told you such a thing, but I can assure you I never meant to make you unhappy. I am sure that in a quarter of an hour M—— M—— will be crying likewise."

The alarum struck, and, having no longer any hope of seeing M—— M—— come to justify herself, I kissed C—— C——. I gave her the key of the casino, requesting her to return it for me to M—— M——, and my young friend having gone back to the convent, I put on my mask and left the casino.

CHAPTER III

I AM IN DANGER OF PERISHING IN THE LAGUNES—ILLNESS—LETTERS FROM C. C. AND M. M.—THE QUARREL IS MADE UP—MEETING AT THE CASINO OF MURAN—I LEARN THE NAME OF M. M.'S FRIEND, AND CONSENT TO GIVE HIM A SUPPER AT MY CASINO IN THE COMPANY OF OUR COMMON MISTRESS.

The weather was fearful. The wind was blowing fiercely, and it was bitterly cold. When I reached the shore, I looked for a gondola, I called the gondoliers, but, in contravention to the police regulations, there was neither gondola nor gondolier. What was I to do? Dressed in light linen, I was hardly in a fit state to walk along the wharf for an hour in such weather. I should most likely have gone back to the casino if I had had the key, but I was paying the penalty of the foolish spite which had made me give it up. The wind almost carried me off my feet, and there was no house that I could enter to get a shelter.

I had in my pockets three hundred philippes that I had won in the evening, and a purse full

of gold. I had therefore every reason to fear the thieves of Muran—a very dangerous class of cut-throats, determined murderers who enjoyed and abused a certain impunity, because they had some privileges granted to them by the Government on account of the services they rendered in the manufactories of looking-glasses and in the glass works which are numerous on the island. In order to prevent their emigration, the Government had granted them the freedom of Venice. I dreaded meeting a pair of them, who would have stripped me of everything, at least. I had not, by chance, with me the knife which all honest men must carry to defend their lives in my dear country. I was truly in an unpleasant predicament.

I was thus painfully situated when I thought I could see a light through the crevices of a small house. I knocked modestly against the shutter. A voice called out,—

"Who is knocking?"

And at the same moment the shutter was pushed open.

"What do you want?" asked a man, rather astonished at my costume.

I explained my predicament in a few words, and giving him one sequin I begged his permission to shelter myself under his roof. Convinced by my sequin rather than my words, he opened the door, I went in, and promising him another sequin for his trouble I requested him to get me a gondola to

take me to Venice. He dressed himself hurriedly, thanking God for that piece of good fortune, and went out assuring me that he would soon get me a gondola. I remained alone in a miserable room in which all his family, sleeping together in a large, ill-looking bed, were staring at me in consequence of my extraordinary costume. In half an hour the good man returned to announce that the gondoliers were at the wharf, but that they wanted to be paid in advance. I raised no objection, gave a sequin to the man for his trouble, and went to the wharf.

The sight of two strong gondoliers made me get into the gondola without anxiety, and we left the shore without being much disturbed by the wind, but when we had gone beyond the island, the storm attacked us with such fury that I thought myself lost, for, although a good swimmer, I was not sure I had strength enough to resist the violence of the waves and swim to the shore. I ordered the men to go back to the island, but they answered that I had not to deal with a couple of cowards, and that I had no occasion to be afraid. I knew the disposition of our gondoliers, and I made up my mind to say no more.

But the wind increased in violence, the foaming waves rushed into the gondola, and my two rowers, in spite of their vigour and of their courage, could no longer guide it. We were only within one hundred yards of the mouth of the Jesuits' Canal, when a terrible gust of wind threw one of the

barcarols into the sea; most fortunately he contrived to hold by the gondola and to get in again, but he had lost his oar, and while he was securing another the gondola had tacked, and had already gone a considerable distance abreast. The position called for immediate decision, and I had no wish to take my supper with Neptune. I threw a handful of philippes into the gondola, and ordered the gondoliers to throw overboard the *felce* which covered the boat. The ringing of money, as much as the imminent danger, ensured instant obedience, and then, the wind having less hold upon us, my brave boatmen shewed Æolus that their efforts could conquer him, for in less than five minutes we shot into the Beggars' Canal, and I reached the Bragadin Palace. I went to bed at once, covering myself heavily in order to regain my natural heat, but sleep, which alone could have restored me to health, would not visit me.

Five or six hours afterwards, M. de Bragadin and his two inseparable friends paid me a visit, and found me raving with fever. That did not prevent my respectable protector from laughing at the sight of the costume of Pierrot lying on the sofa. After congratulating me upon having escaped with my life out of such a bad predicament, they left me alone. In the evening I perspired so profusely that my bed had to be changed. The next day my fever and delirium increased, and two days after, the fever having abated, I found myself

almost crippled and suffering fearfully with lumbago. I felt that nothing could relieve me but a strict regimen, and I bore the evil patiently.

Early on the Wednesday morning, Laura, the faithful messenger, called on me; I was still in my bed: I told her that I could neither read nor write, and I asked her to come again the next day. She placed on the table, near my bed, the parcel she had for me, and she left me, knowing what had occurred to me sufficiently to enable her to inform C—— C—— of the state in which I was.

Feeling a little better towards the evening, I ordered my servant to lock me in my room, and I opened C—— C——'s letter. The first thing I found in the parcel, and which caused me great pleasure, was the key of the casino which she returned to me. I had already repented having given it up, and I was beginning to feel that I had been in the wrong. It acted like a refreshing balm upon me. The second thing, not less dear after the return of the precious key, was a letter from M—— M——, the seal of which I was not long in breaking, and I read the following lines:

"The particulars which you have read, or which you are going to read, in the letter of my friend, will cause you, I hope, to forget the fault which I have committed so innocently, for I trusted, on the contrary, that you would be very happy. I saw all and heard all, and you would not have gone away without the key if I had not, most

unfortunately, fallen asleep an hour before your departure. Take back the key and come to the casino to-morrow night, since Heaven has saved you from the storm. Your love may, perhaps, give you the right to complain, but not to ill-treat a woman who certainly has not given you any mark of contempt."

I afterwards read the letter of my dear C—— C——, and I will give a copy of it here, because I think it will prove interesting:

"I entreat you, dear husband, not to send back this key, unless you have become the most cruel of men, unless you find pleasure in tormenting two women who love you ardently, and who love you for yourself only. Knowing your excellent heart, I trust you will go to the casino to-morrow evening and make it up with M—— M——, who cannot go there to-night. You will see that you are in the wrong, dearest, and that, far from despising you, my dear friend loves you only. In the mean time, let me tell you what you are not acquainted with, and what you must be anxious to knew.

"Immediately after you had gone away in that fearful storm which caused me such anguish, and just as I was preparing to return to the convent, I was much surprised to see standing before me my dear M—— M——, who from some hiding-place had heard all you had said. She had several times been on the point of shewing

herself, but she had always been prevented by the fear of coming out of season, and thus stopping a reconciliation which she thought was inevitable between two fond lovers. Unfortunately, sleep had conquered her before your departure, and she only woke when the alarum struck, too late to detain you, for you had rushed with the haste of a man who is flying from some terrible danger. As soon as I saw her, I gave her the key, although I did not know what it meant, and my friend, heaving a deep sigh, told me that she would explain everything as soon as we were safe in her room. We left the casino in a dreadful storm, trembling for your safety, and not thinking of our own danger. As soon as we were in the convent I resumed my usual costume, and M—— M—— went to bed. I took a seat near her, and this is what she told me. 'When you left your ring in my hands to go to your aunt, who had sent for you, I examined it with so much attention that at last I suspected the small blue spot to be connected with the secret spring; I took a pin, succeeded in removing the top part, and I cannot express the joy I felt when I saw that we both loved the same man, but no more can I give you an idea of my sorrow when I thought that I was encroaching upon your rights. Delighted, however, with my discovery, I immediately conceived a plan which would procure you the pleasure of supping with him. I closed the ring

again and returned it to you, telling you at the same time that I had not been able to discover anything. I was then truly the happiest of women. Knowing your heart, knowing that you were aware of the love of your lover for me, since I had innocently shewed you his portrait, and happy in the idea that you were not jealous of me, I would have despised myself if I had entertained any feelings different from your own, the more so that your rights over him were by far stronger than mine. As for the mysterious manner in which you always kept from me the name of your husband, I easily guessed that you were only obeying his orders, and I admired your noble sentiments and the goodness of your heart. In my opinion your lover was afraid of losing us both, if we found out that neither the one nor the other of us possessed his whole heart. I could not express my deep sorrow when I thought that, after you had seen me in possession of his portrait, you continued to act in the same manner towards me, although you could not any longer hope to be the sole object of his love. Then I had but one idea; to prove to both of you that M—— M—— is worthy of your affection, of your friendship, of your esteem. I was indeed thoroughly happy when I thought that the felicity of our trio would be increased a hundredfold, for is it not an unbearable misery to keep a secret from the being we adore? I made you take my place, and I thought that

proceeding a masterpiece. You allowed me to dress you as a nun, and with a compliance which proves your confidence in me you went to my casino without knowing where you were going. As soon as you had landed, the gondola came back, and I went to a place well known to our friend from which, without being seen, I could follow all your movements and hear everything you said. I was the author of the play; it was natural that I should witness it, the more so that I felt certain of seeing and hearing nothing that would not be very agreeable to me. I reached the casino a quarter of an hour after you, and I cannot tell you my delightful surprise when I saw that dear Pierrot who had amused us so much, and whom we had not recognized. But I was fated to feel no other pleasure than that of his appearance. Fear, surprise, and anxiety overwhelmed me at once when I saw the effect produced upon him by the disappointment of his expectation, and I felt unhappy. Our lover took the thing wrongly, and he went away in despair; he loves me still, but if he thinks of me it is only to try to forget me. Alas! he will succeed but too soon! By sending back that key he proves that he will never again go to the casino. Fatal night! When my only wish was to minister to the happiness of three persons, how is it that the very reverse of my wish has occurred? It will kill me, dear friend, unless you contrive to make him understand reason, for I feel that without him

I cannot live. You must have the means of writing to him, you know him, you know his name. In the name of all goodness, send back this key to him with a letter to persuade him to come to the casino to-morrow or on the following day, if it is only to speak to me; and I hope to convince him of my love and my innocence. Rest to-day, dearest, but to-morrow write to him, tell him the whole truth; take pity on your poor friend, and forgive her for loving your lover. I shall write a few lines myself; you will enclose them in your letter. It is my fault if he no longer loves you; you ought to hate me, and yet you are generous enough to love me. I adore you; I have seen his tears, I have seen how well his soul can love; I know him now. I could not have believed that men were able to love so much. I have passed a terrible night. Do not think I am angry, dear friend, because you confided to him that we love one another like two lovers; it does not displease me, and with him it was no indiscretion, because his mind is as free of prejudices as his heart is good.'

"Tears were choking her. I tried to console her, and I most willingly promised her to write to you. She never closed her eyes throughout that day, but I slept soundly for four hours.

"When we got up we found the convent full of bad news, which interested us a great deal more than people imagined. It was reported that, an hour before day-break, a fishing-boat had been lost

in the lagune, that two gondolas had been capsized, and that the people in them had perished. You may imagine our anguish! We dared not ask any questions, but it was just the hour at which you had left me, and we entertained the darkest forebodings. We returned to our room, where M—— M—— fainted away. More courageous than she is, I told her that you were a good swimmer, but I could not allay her anxiety, and she went to bed with a feverish chill. Just at that moment, my aunt, who is of a very cheerful disposition, came in, laughing, to tell us that during the storm the Pierrot who had made us laugh so much had had a narrow escape of being drowned. 'Ah! the poor Pierrot!' I exclaimed, tell us all about him, dear aunt. I am very glad he was saved. Who is he? Do you know?' 'Oh! yes,' she answered, 'everything is known, for he was taken home by our gondoliers. One of them has just told me that Pierrot, having spent the night at the Briati ball, did not find any gondola to return to Venice, and that our gondoliers took him for a sequin. One of the men fell into the sea, but then the brave Pierrot, throwing handfuls of silver upon the *Zenia,* pitched the *felce* over board, and the wind having less hold they reached Venice safely through the Beggars' Canal. This morning the lucky gondoliers divided thirty philippes which they found in the gondola, and they have been fortunate enough to pick up their *felce.* Pierrot will remember Muran

and the ball at Briati. The man says that he is the son of M. de Bragadin, the procurator's brother. He was taken to the palace of that nobleman nearly dead from cold, for he was dressed in light calico, and had no cloak.'

"When my aunt had left us, we looked at one another for several minutes without uttering a word, but we felt that the good news had brought back life to us. M—— M—— asked me whether you were really the son of M. de Bragadin. 'It might be so,' I said to her, 'but his name does not shew my lover to be the bastard of that nobleman, and still less his legitimate child, for M. de Bragadin was never married.' 'I should be very sorry,' said M—— M——, 'if he were his son.' I thought it right, then, to tell her your true name, and of the application made to my father by M. de Bragadin for my hand, the consequence of which was that I had been shut up in the convent. Therefore, my own darling, your little wife has no longer any secret to keep from M—— M——, and I hope you will not accuse me of indiscretion, for it is better that our dear friend should know all the truth than only half of it. We have been greatly amused, as you may well suppose, by the certainty with which people say that you spent all the night at the Briati ball. When people do not know everything, they invent, and what might be is often accepted in the place of what is in reality; sometimes it proves very fortunate. At all events the news did a great

deal of good to my friend, who is now much better. She has had an excellent night, and the hope of seeing you at the casino has restored all her beauty. She has read this letter three or four times, and has smothered me with kisses. I long to give her the letter which you are going to write to her. The messenger will wait for it. Perhaps I shall see you again at the casino, and in a better temper, I hope. Adieu."

It did not require much argument to conquer me. When I had finished the letter, I was at once the admirer of C—— C—— and the ardent lover of M—— M——. But, alas! although the fever had left me, I was crippled. Certain that Laura would come again early the next morning, I could not refrain from writing to both of them—a short letter, it is true, but long enough to assure them that reason had again taken possession of my poor brain. I wrote to C—— C—— that she had done right in telling her friend my name, the more so that, as I did not attend their church any longer, I had no reason to make a mystery of it. In everything else I freely acknowledged myself in the wrong, and I promised her that I would atone by giving M—— M—— the strongest possible proofs of my repentance as soon as I could go again to her casino.

This is the letter that I wrote to my adorable nun:

"I gave C—— C—— the key of your casino,

to be returned to you, my own charming friend, because I believed myself trifled with and despised, of malice aforethought, by the woman I worship. In my error I thought myself unworthy of presenting myself before your eyes, and, in spite of love, horror made me shudder. Such was the effect produced upon me by an act which would have appeared to me admirable, if my self-love had not blinded me and upset my reason. But, dearest, to admire it it would have been necessary for my mind to be as noble as yours, and I have proved how far it is from being so. I am inferior to you in all things, except in passionate love, and I will prove it to you at our next meeting, when I will beg on my knees a generous pardon. Believe me, beloved creature, if I wish ardently to recover my health, it is only to have it in my power to prove by my love a thousand times increased, how ashamed I am of my errors. My painful lumbago has alone prevented me from answering your short note yesterday, to express to you my regrets, and the love which has been enhanced in me by your generosity, alas! so badly rewarded. I can assure you that in the lagunes, with death staring me in the face, I regretted no one but you, nothing but having outraged you. But in the fearful danger then threatening me I only saw a punishment from Heaven. If I had not cruelly sent back to you the key of the casino, I should most likely have returned there, and should have avoided the

sorrow as well as the physical pains which I am now suffering as an expiation. I thank you a thousand times for having recalled me to myself, and you may be certain that for the future I will keep better control over myself; nothing shall make me doubt your love. But, darling, what do you say of C—— C——? Is she not an incarnate angel who can be compared to no one but you? You love us both equally. I am the only one weak and faulty, and you make me ashamed of myself. Yet I feel that I would give my life for her as well as for you. I feel curious about one thing, but I cannot trust it to paper. You will satisfy that curiosity the first time I shall be able to go to the casino before two days at the earliest. I will let you know two days beforehand. In the mean time, I entreat you to think a little of me, and to be certain of my devoted love. Adieu."

The next morning Laura found me sitting up in bed, and in a fair way to recover my health. I requested her to tell C—— C—— that I felt much better, and I gave her the letter I had written. She had brought me one from my dear little wife, in which I found enclosed a note from M—— M——. Those two letters were full of tender expressions of love, anxiety for my health, and ardent prayers for my recovery.

Six days afterwards, feeling much stronger, I went to Muran, where the keeper of the casino

handed me a letter from M—— M——. She wrote to me how impatient she was for my complete recovery, and how desirous she was to see me in possession of her casino, with all the privileges which she hoped I would retain for ever.

"Let me know, I entreat you," she added, "when we are likely to meet again, either at Muran or in Venice, as you please. Be quite certain that whenever we meet we shall be alone and without a witness."

I answered at once, telling her that we would meet the day after the morrow at her casino, because I wanted to receive her loving absolution in the very spot where I had outraged the most generous of women.

I was longing to see her again, for I was ashamed of my cruel injustice towards her, and panting to atone for my wrongs. Knowing her disposition, and reflecting calmly upon what had taken place, it was now evident to me that what she had done, very far from being a mark of contempt, was the refined effort of a love wholly devoted to me. Since she had found out that I was the lover of her young friend, could she imagine that my heart belonged only to herself? In the same way that her love for me did not prevent her from being compliant with the ambassador, she admitted the possibility of my being the same with C—— C——. She overlooked the difference of constitution

between the two sexes, and the privileges enjoyed by women.

Now that age has whitened my hair and deadened the ardour of my senses, my imagination does not take such a high flight, and I think differently. I am conscious that my beautiful nun sinned against womanly reserve and modesty, the two most beautiful appanages of the fair sex, but if that unique, or at least rare, woman was guilty of an eccentricity which I then thought a virtue, she was at all events exempt from that fearful venom called jealousy—an unhappy passion which devours the miserable being who is labouring under it, and destroys the love that gave it birth.

Two days afterwards, on the 4th of February, 1754, I had the supreme felicity of finding myself again alone with my beloved mistress. She wore the dress of a nun. As we both felt guilty, the moment we saw each other, by a spontaneous movement, we fell both on our knees, folded in each other's arms. We had both ill-treated Love; she had treated him like a child, I had adored him after the fashion of a Jansenist. But where could we have found the proper language for the excuses we had to address to each other for the mutual forgiveness we had to entreat and to grant? Kisses, —that mute, yet expressive language, that delicate, voluptuous contact which sends sentiment coursing rapidly through the veins, which expresses at the same time the feeling of the heart and the impressions

of the mind—that language was the only one we had recourse to, and without having uttered one syllable, dear reader, oh, how well we agreed!

Both overwhelmed with emotion, longing to give one another some proofs of the sincerity of our reconciliation and of the ardent fire which was consuming us, we rose without unclasping our arms, and falling (a most amorous group!) on the nearest sofa, we remained there until the heaving of a deep sigh which we would not have stopped, even if we had known that it was to be the last!

Thus was completed our happy reconciliation, and the calm infused into the soul by contentment, burst into a hearty laugh when we noticed that I had kept on my cloak and my mask. After we had enjoyed our mirth, I unmasked myself, and I asked her whether it was quite true that no one had witnessed our reconciliation.

She took up one of the candlesticks, and seizing my hand,—

"Come," she said.

She led me to the other end of the room, before a large cupboard which I had already suspected of containing the secret. She opened it, and when she had moved a sliding plank I saw a door through which we entered a pretty closet furnished with everything necessary to a person wishing to pass a few hours there. Near the sofa was a sliding panel. M—— M—— removed it,

and through twenty holes placed at a distance from each other I saw every part of the room in which nature and love had performed for our curious friend a play in six acts, during which I did not think he had occasion to be dissatisfied with the actors.

"Now," said M—— M——, "I am going to satisfy the curiosity which you were prudent enough not to trust to paper."

"But you cannot guess. . . . ."

"Silence, dearest! Love would not be of divine origin did he not possess the faculty of divination. He knows all, and here is the proof. Do you not wish to know whether my friend was with me during the fatal night which has cost me so many tears?"

"You have guessed rightly."

"Well, then, he was with me, and you must not be angry, for you then completed your conquest of him. He admired your character, your love, your sentiments, your honesty. He could not help expressing his astonishment at the rectitude of my instinct, or his approval of the passion I felt for you. It was he who consoled me in the morning assuring me that you would certainly come back to me as soon as you knew my real feelings, the loyalty of my intentions and my good faith."

"But you must often have fallen asleep, for unless excited by some powerful interest, it is

impossible to pass eight hours in darkness and in silence."

"We were moved by the deepest interest: besides, we were in darkness only when we kept these holes open. The plank was on during our supper, and we were listening in religious silence to your slightest whisper. The interest which kept my friend awake was perhaps greater than mine. He told me that he never had had before a better opportunity of studying the human heart, and that you must have passed the most painful night. He truly pitied you. We were delighted with C—— C——, for it is indeed wonderful that a young girl of fifteen should reason as she did to justify my conduct, without any other weapons but those given her by nature and truth; she must have the soul of an angel. If you ever marry her, you will have the most heavenly wife. I shall of course feel miserable if I lose her, but your happiness will make amends for all. Do you know, dearest, that I cannot understand how you could fall in love with me after having known her, any more than I can conceive how she does not hate me ever since she has discovered that I have robbed her of your heart. My dear C—— C—— has truly something divine in her disposition. Do you know why she confided to you her barren loves with me? Because, as she told me herself, she wished to ease her conscience, thinking that she was in some measure unfaithful to you."

"Does she think herself bound to be entirely faithful to me, with the knowledge she has now of my own unfaithfulness?"

"She is particularly delicate and conscientious, and though she believes herself truly your wife, she does not think that she has any right to control your actions, but she believes herself bound to give you an account of all she does."

"Noble girl!"

The prudent wife of the door-keeper having brought the supper, we sat down to the well-supplied table. M—— M—— remarked that I had become much thinner.

"The pains of the body do not fatten a man," I said, "and the sufferings of the mind emaciate him. But we have suffered sufficiently, and we must be wise enough never to recall anything which can be painful to us."

"You are quite right, my love; the instants that man is compelled to give up to misfortune or to suffering are as many moments stolen from his life, but he doubles his existence when he has the talent of multiplying his pleasures, no matter of what nature they may be."

We amused ourselves in talking over past dangers, Pierrot's disguise, and the ball at Briati, where she had been told that another Pierrot had made his appearance.

M—— M—— wondered at the extraordinary effect of a disguise, for, said she to me,——

"The Pierrot in the parlour of the convent seemed to me taller and thinner than you. If chance had not made you take the convent gondola, if you had not had the strange idea of assuming the disguise of Pierrot, I should not have known who you were, for my friends in the convent would not have been interested in you. I was delighted when I heard that you were not a patrician, as I feared, because, had you been one, I might in time have run some great danger."

I knew very well what she had to fear, but pretending complete ignorance,——

"I cannot conceive," I said, "what danger you might run on account of my being a patrician."

"My darling, I cannot speak to you openly, unless you give me your word to do what I am going to ask you."

"How could I hesitate, my love, in doing anything to please you, provided my honour is not implicated? Have we not now everything in common? Speak, idol of my heart, tell me your reasons, and rely upon my love; it is the guarantee of my ready compliance in everything that can give you pleasure."

"Very well. I want you to give a supper in your casino to me and my friend, who is dying to make your acquaintance."

"And I foresee that after supper you will leave me to go with him."

"You must feel that propriety compels me to do so."

"Your friend already knows, I suppose, who I am?"

"I thought it was right to tell him, because if I had not told him he could not have entertained the hope of supping with you, and especially at your house."

"I understand. I guess your friend is one of the foreign ambassadors."

"Precisely."

"But may I hope that he will so far honour me as to throw up his incognito?"

"That is understood. I shall introduce him to you according to accepted forms, telling his name and his political position."

"Then it is all for the best, darling. How could you suppose that I would have any difficulty in procuring you that pleasure, when on the contrary, nothing could please me more myself? Name the day, and be quite certain that I shall anxiously look for it."

"I should have been sure of your compliance, if you had not given me cause to doubt it."

"It is a home-thrust, but I deserve it."

"And I hope it will not make you angry. Now I am happy. Our friend is M. de Bernis, the French ambassador. He will come masked, and as soon as he shews his features I shall present him to you. Recollect that you must

treat him as my lover, but you must not appear to know that he is aware of our intimacy."

"I understand that very well, and you shall have every reason to be pleased with my urbanity. The idea of that supper is delightful to me, and I hope that the reality will be as agreeable. You were quite right, my love, to dread my being a patrician, for in that case the State-Inquisitors, who every often think of nothing but of making a show of their zeal, would not have failed to meddle with us, and the mere idea of the possible consequences makes me shudder. I under The Leads—you dishonoured—the abbess—the convent! Good God! Yes, if you had told me what you thought, I would have given you my name, and I could have done so all the more easily that my reserve was only caused by the fear of being known, and of C—— C—— being taken to another convent by her father. But can you appoint a day for the supper? I long to have it all arranged."

"To-day is the fourth; well, then, in four days."

"That will be the eighth?"

"Exactly so. We will go to your casino after the second ballet. Give me all necessary particulars to enable us to find the house without enquiring from anyone."

I sat down and I wrote down the most exact particulars to find the casino either by land or by

water. Delighted with the prospect of such a party of pleasure, I asked my mistress to go to bed, but I remarked to her that, being convalescent and having made a hearty supper, I should be very likely to pay my first homages to Morpheus. Yielding to the circumstances, she set the alarum for ten o'clock, and we went to bed in the alcove. As soon as we woke up, Love claimed our attention and he had no cause of complaint, but towards midnight we fell asleep, our lips fastened together, and we found ourselves in that position in the morning when we opened our eyes. Although there was no time to lose, we could not make up our minds to part without making one more offering to Venus.

I remained in the casino after the departure of my divinity, and slept until noon. As soon as I had dressed myself, I returned to Venice, and my first care was to give notice to my cook, so that the supper of the 8th of February should be worthy of the guests and worthy of me.

CHAPTER IV

SUPPER AT MY CASINO WITH M. M. AND M. DE BERNIS, THE FRENCH AMBASSADOR—A PROPOSAL FROM M. M.; I ACCEPT IT—CONSEQUENCES—C. C. IS UNFAITHFUL TO ME, AND I CANNOT COMPLAIN

I FELT highly pleased with the supper-party I had arranged with M—— M——, and I ought to have been happy. Yet I was not so; but whence came the anxiety which was a torment to me? Whence? From my fatal habit of gambling. That passion was rooted in me; to live and to play were to me two identical things, and as I could not hold the bank I would go and punt at the *ridotto,* where I lost my money morning and night. That state of things made me miserable. Perhaps someone will say to me,—

"Why did you play, when there was no need of it, when you were in want of nothing, when you had all the money you could wish to satisfy your fancies?"

That would be a troublesome question if I had

not made it a law to tell the truth. Well, then, dear inquisitive reader, if I played with almost the certainty of losing, although no one, perhaps, was more sensible than I was to the losses made in gambling, it is because I had in me the evil spirit of avarice; it is because I loved prodigality, and because my heart bled when I found myself compelled to spend any money that I had not won at the gaming-table. It is an ugly vice, dear reader, I do not deny it. However, all I can say is that, during the four days previous to the supper, I lost all the gold won for me by M—— M——.

On the anxiously-expected day I went to my casino, where at the appointed hour M—— M—— came with her friend, whom she introduced to me as soon as he had taken off his mask.

"I had an ardent wish, sir," said M. de Bernis to me, "to renew acquaintance with you, since I heard from madame that we had known each other in Paris."

With these words he looked at me attentively, as people will do when they are trying to recollect a person whom they have lost sight of. I then told him that we had never spoken to one another, and that he had not seen enough of me to recollect my features now.

"I had the honour," I added, "to dine with your excellency at M. de Mocenigo's house, but you talked all the time with Marshal Keith, the Prussian ambassador, and I was not fortunate

enough to attract your attention. As you were on the point of leaving Paris to return to Venice, you went away almost immediately after dinner, and I have never had the honour of seeing you since that time."

"Now I recollect you," he answered, "and I remember asking whether you were not the secretary of the embassy. But from this day we shall not forget each other again, for the mysteries which unite us are of a nature likely to establish a lasting intimacy between us."

The amiable couple were not long before they felt thoroughly at ease, and we sat down to supper, of which, of course, I did the honours. The ambassador, a fine connoisseur in wines, found mine excellent, and was delighted to hear that I had them from Count Algarotti, who was reputed as having the best cellar in Venice.

My supper was delicate and abundant, and my manners towards my handsome guests were those of a private individual receiving his sovereign and his mistress. I saw that M—— M—— was charmed with the respect with which I treated her, and with my conversation, which evidently interested the ambassador highly. The serious character of a first meeting did not prevent the utterance of witty jests, for in that respect M. de Bernis was a true Frenchman. I have travelled much, I have deeply studied men, individually and in a body, but I have never met with true sociability

except in Frenchmen; they alone know how to jest, and it is rare, delicate, refined jesting, which animates conversation and makes society charming.

During our delightful supper wit was never wanting, and the amiable M—— M—— led the conversation to the romantic combination which had given her occasion to know me. Naturally, she proceeded to speak of my passion for C—— C——, and she gave such an interesting description of that young girl that the ambassador listened with as much attention as if he had never seen the object of it. But that was his part, for he was not aware that I had been informed of his having witnessed from his hiding-place my silly interview with C—— C——. He told M—— M— that he would have been delighted if she had brought her young friend to sup with us.

"That would be running too great a risk," answered the cunning nun, "but if you approve of it," she added, looking at me, "I can make you sup with her at my casino, for we sleep in the same room."

That offer surprised me much, but it was not the moment to shew it, so I replied,—

"It is impossible, madam, to add anything to the pleasure of your society, yet I confess I should be pleased if you could contrive to do us that great favour."

"Well, I will think of it."

"But," observed the ambassador, "if I am to

be one of the party, I think it would be right to apprize the young lady of it."

"It is not necessary, for I will write to her to agree to whatever madam may propose to her. I will do so to-morrow."

I begged the ambassador to prepare himself with a good stock of indulgence for a girl of fifteen who had no experience of the world. In the course of the evening I related the history of O-Morphi, which greatly amused him. He entreated me to let him see her portrait. He informed me that she was still an inmate of the *Parc-aux-cerfs,* where she continued to be the delight of Louis XV., to whom she had given a child. My guests left me after midnight, highly pleased, and I remained alone.

The next morning, faithful to the promise I had made to my beautiful nun, I wrote to C—— C—— without informing her that there would be a fourth person at the projected supper, and having given my note to Laura I repaired to Muran, where I found the following letter from M—— M——:

I could not sleep soundly, my love, if I did not ease my conscience of an unpleasant weight. Perhaps you did not approve of the *partie carrée* with our young friend, and you may not have objected out of mere politeness. Tell me the truth, dearest, for, should you not look forward to that meeting with pleasure, I can contrive to undo it without implicating you in any way; trust me for

that. If, however, you have no objection to the party, it will take place as agreed. Believe me, I love your soul more than your heart—I mean than your person. Adieu."

Her fear was very natural, but out of shamefacedness I did not like to retract. M—— M—— knew me well, and as a skilful tactician she attacked my weak side.

Here is my answer:

"I expected your letter, my best beloved, and you cannot doubt it, because, as you know me thoroughly, you must be aware that I know you as well. Yes, I know your mind, and I know what idea you must entertain of mine, because I have exposed to you all my weakness and irritability by my sophisms. I do penance for it, dearest, when I think that having raised your suspicions your tenderness for me must have been weakened. Forget my visions, I beg, and be quite certain that for the future my soul will be in unison with yours. The supper must take place, it will be a pleasure for me, but let me confess that in accepting it I have shewn myself more grateful than polite. C—— C—— is a novice, and I am not sorry to give her an opportunity of seeing the world. In what school could she learn better than yours? Therefore I recommend her to you, and you will please me much by continuing to shew your care and friendship towards her, and by increasing, if possible, the sum of your goodness. I fear that

you may entice her to take the veil, and if she did I would never console myself. Your friend has quite captivated me; he is a superior man, and truly charming."

Thus did I wittingly deprive myself of the power of drawing back, but I was able to realize the full force of the situation. I had no difficulty in guessing that the ambassador was in love with C—— C——, and that he had confessed as much to M—— M——, who, not being in a position to object to it, was compelled to shew herself compliant, and to assist him in everything that could render his passion successful. She could certainly not do anything without my consent, and she had evidently considered the affair too delicate to venture upon proposing the party point-blank to me. They had, no doubt, put their heads together, so that by bringing the conversation on that subject I should find myself compelled, for the sake of politeness and perhaps of my inward feelings, to fall into the snare. The ambassador, whose profession it was to carry on intrigues skilfully, had succeeded well, and I had taken the bait as he wished. There was nothing left for me but to put a good face on the matter, not only so as not to shew myself a very silly being, but also in order not to prove myself shamefully ungrateful towards a man who had granted me unheard-of privileges. Nevertheless, the consequence of it all was likely to be some coolness in my feelings towards both my

mistresses. M—— M—— had become conscious of this after she had returned to the convent, and wishing to screen herself from all responsibility she had lost no time in writing to me that she would cause the projected supper to be abandoned, in case I should disapprove of it, but she knew very well that I would not accept her offer. Self-love is a stronger passion even than jealousy; it does not allow a man who has some pretension to wit to shew himself jealous, particularly towards a person who is not tainted by that base passion, and has proved it.

The next day, having gone early to the casino, I found the ambassador already there, and he welcomed me in the most friendly manner. He told me that, if he had known me in Paris he would have introduced me at the court, where I should certainly have made my fortune. Now, when I think of that, I say to myself, "That might have been the case, but of what good would it have been to me?" Perhaps I should have fallen a victim of the Revolution, like so many others. M. de Bernis himself would have been one of those victims if Fate had not allowed him to die in Rome in 1794. He died there unhappy, although wealthy, unless his feelings had undergone a complete change before his death, and I do not believe it.

I asked him whether he liked Venice, and he answered that he could not do otherwise than like

that city, in which he enjoyed excellent health, and in which, with plenty of money, life could be enjoyed better than anywhere else.

"But I do not expect," he added, "to be allowed to keep this embassy very long. Be kind enough to let that remain between us. I do not wish to make M—— M—— unhappy."

We were conversing in all confidence when M—— M—— arrived with her young friend, who showed her surprise at seeing another man with me, but I encouraged her by the most tender welcome, and she recovered all her composure when she saw the delight of the stranger at being answered by her in good French. It gave us both an opportunity of paying the warmest compliments to the mistress who had taught her so well.

C—— C—— was truly charming; her looks, bright and modest at the same time, seemed to say to me, "You must belong to me." I wished to see her shine before our friends, and I contrived to conquer a cowardly feeling of jealousy which, in spite of myself, was beginning to get hold of me. I took care to make her talk on such subjects as I knew to be familiar to her. I developed her natural intelligence, and had the satisfaction of seeing her admired.

Applauded, flattered, animated by the satisfaction she could read in my eyes, C—— C—— appeared a prodigy to M. de Bernis, and, oh! what a contradiction of the human heart! I was

pleased, yet I trembled lest he should fall in love with her! What an enigma! I was intent myself upon a work which would have caused me to murder any man who dared to undertake it.

During the supper, which was worthy of a king, the ambassador treated C—— C—— with the most delicate attentions. Wit, cheerfulness, decent manners, attended our delightful party, and did not expel the gaiety and the merry jests with which a Frenchman knows how to season every conversation.

An observing critic who, without being acquainted with us, wished to guess whether love was present at our happy party, might have suspected, perhaps, but he certainly could not have affirmed, that it was there. M—— M—— treated the ambassador as a friend. She shewed no other feeling towards me than that of deep esteem, and she behaved to C—— C—— with the tender affection of a sister. M. de Bernis was kind, polite, and amiable with M—— M——, but he never ceased to take the greatest interest in every word uttered by C—— C——, who played her part to perfection, because she had only to follow her own nature, and, that nature being beautiful, C—— C—— could not fail to be most charming.

We had passed five delightful hours, and the ambassador seemed more pleased even than any of us. M—— M—— had the air of a person satisfied with her own work, and I was

playing the part of an approving spectator. C—— C—— looked highly pleased at having secured the general approbation, and there was, perhaps, a slight feeling of vanity in her arising from the special attention which the ambassador had bestowed on her. She looked at me, smiling, and I could easily understand the language of her soul, by which she wished to tell me that she felt perfectly well the difference between the society in which she was then, and that in which her brother had given us such a disgusting specimen of his depravity.

After midnight it was time to think of our departure, and M. de Bernis undertook all the complimentary part. Thanking M—— M—— for the most agreeable supper he had ever made in his life, he contrived to make her offer a repetition of it for two days afterwards, and he asked me, for the sake of appearance, whether I should not find as much delight in that second meeting as himself. Could he have any doubt of my answering affirmatively? I believe not, for I had placed myself under the necessity of being compliant. All being agreed, we parted company.

The next day, when I thought of that exemplary supper, I had no difficulty in guessing what the ultimate result would be. The ambassador owed his great fortune entirely to the fair sex, because he possessed to the highest degree the art of *coddling* love; and as his nature was

eminently voluptuous he found his advantage in it, because he knew how to call desires into existence, and this procured him enjoyments worthy of his delicate taste. I saw that he was deeply in love with C—— C——, and I was far from supposing him the man to be satisfied with looking at her lovely eyes. He certainly had some plan arranged, and M—— M——, in spite of all her honesty, was the prime manager of it. I knew that she would carry it on with such delicate skill that I should not see any evidence of it. Although I did not feel disposed to shew more compliance than was strictly just, I foresaw that in the end I should be the dupe, and my poor C—— C—— the victim, of a cunningly-contrived trick. I could not make up my mind either to consent with a good grace, or to throw obstacles in the way, and, believing my dear little wife incapable of abandoning herself to anything likely to displease me, I allowed myself to be taken off my guard, and to rely upon the difficulty of seducing her. Stupid calculation! Self-love and shamefacedness prevented me from using my common sense. At all events, that intrigue kept me in a state of fever because I was afraid of its consequences, and yet curiosity mastered me to such an extent that I was longing for the result. I knew very well that a second edition of the supper did not imply that the same play would be performed a second time, and I foresaw that the changes would be strongly marked. But I thought

myself bound in honour not to retract. I could not lead the intrigue, but I believed myself sufficiently skilful to baffle all their manœuvrings.

After all those considerations, however, considerations which enabled me to assume the countenance of false bravery, the inexperience of C—— C——, who, in spite of all the knowledge she had lately acquired, was only a novice, caused me great anxiety. It was easy to abuse her natural wish to be polite, but that fear gave way very soon before the confidence I had in M—— M——'s delicacy. I thought that, having seen how I had spent six hours with that young girl, knowing for a certainty that I intended to marry her, M—— M—— would never be guilty of such base treason. All these thoughts, worthy only of a weak and bashful jealousy, brought no conclusive decision. I had to follow the current and watch events.

At the appointed time I repaired to the casino, where I found my two lovely friends sitting by the fire.

"Good evening, my two divinities, where is our charming Frenchman?"

"He has not arrived yet," answered M—— M——, "but he will doubtless soon be here."

I took off my mask, and sitting between them, I gave them a thousand kisses, taking good care not to shew any preference, and although I knew that they were aware of the unquestionable right

I had upon both of them, I kept within the limits of the utmost decency. I congratulated them upon the mutual inclination they felt for each other, and I saw that they were pleased not to have to blush on that account.

More than one hour was spent in gallant and friendly conversation, without my giving any satisfaction to my burning desires. M—— M—— attracted me more than C—— C——, but I would not for the world have offended the charming girl. M—— M—— was beginning to shew some anxiety about the absence of M. de Bernis, when the doorkeeper brought her a note from him.

"A courier," he wrote, "who arrived two hours ago, prevents my being happy to-night, for I am compelled to pass it in answering the dispatches I have received. I trust that you will forgive and pity me. May I hope that you will kindly grant me on Friday the pleasure of which I am so unfortunately deprived to-day? Let me know your answer by to-morrow. I wish ardently, in that case, to find you with the same guests, to whom I beg you will present my affectionate compliments."

"Well," said M—— M——, "it is not his fault. We will sup without him. Will you come on Friday?"

"Yes, with the greatest pleasure. But what is the matter with you, dear C—— C——? You look sad."

"Sad, no, unless it should be for the sake of my friend, for I have never seen a more polite and more obliging gentleman."

"Very well, dear, I am glad he has rendered you so sensible."

"What do you mean? Could anyone be insensible to his merit?"

"Better still, but I agree with you. Only tell me if you love him?"

"Well, even if I loved him, do you think I would go and tell him? Besides, I am certain that he loves my friend."

So saying, she sat down on M—— M——'s knee, calling her her own little wife, and my two beauties began to bestow on one another caresses which made me laugh heartily. Far from troubling their sport, I excited them, in order to enjoy a spectacle with which I had long been acquainted.

M—— M—— took up a book full of the most lascivious engravings, and said, with a significant glance in my direction,—

"Do you wish me to have a fire lighted in the alcove?"

I understood her, and replied,—

"You would oblige me, for the bed being large we can all three sleep comfortably in it."

I guessed that she feared my suspecting the ambassador of enjoying from the mysterious closet the sight of our amorous trio, and she wished to destroy that suspicion by her proposal.

The table having been laid in front of the alcove, supper was served, and we all did honour to it. We were all blessed with a devouring appetite. While M—— M—— was teaching her friend how to mix punch, I was admiring with delight the progress made in beauty by C—— C——.

"Your bosom," I said to her, "must have become perfect during the last nine months."

"It is like mine," answered M—— M——, "would you like to see for yourself?"

Of course I did not refuse. M—— M—— unlaced her friend, who made no resistance, and performing afterwards the same office upon herself, in less than two minutes I was admiring four rivals contending for the golden apple like the three goddesses, and which would have set at defiance the handsome Paris himself to adjudge the prize without injustice. Need I say what an ardent fire that ravishing sight sent coursing through my veins? I placed immediately on the table the *Académie des Dames,* and pointed out a certain position to M—— M——, who, understanding my wishes, said to C—— C——:

"Will you, darling, represent that group with me?"

A look of compliance was C—— C——'s only answer; she was not yet inured to amorous pleasures as much as her lovely teacher. While I was laughing with delight, the two friends were getting ready, and in a few minutes we were all three in bed, and in a state of nature.

At first, satisfied with enjoying the sight of the barren contest of my two bacchanalians, I was amused by their efforts and by the contrast of colours, for one was dark and the other fair, but soon, excited myself, and consumed by all the fire of voluptuousness, I threw myself upon them, and I made them, one after the other, almost faint away from the excess of love and enjoyment.

Worn out and satiated with pleasure, I invited them to take some rest. We slept until we were awakened by the alarum, which I had taken care to set at four o'clock. We were certain of turning to good account the two hours we had then to spare before parting company, which we did at the dawn of day, humiliated at having to confess our exhaustion, but highly pleased with each other, and longing for a renewal of our delightful pleasures.

The next day, however, when I came to think of that rather too lively night, during which, as is generally the case, Love had routed Reason, I felt some remorse. M—— M—— wanted to convince me of her love, and for that purpose she had combined all the virtues which I attached to my own affection—namely, honour, delicacy, and truth, but her temperament, of which her mind was the slave, carried her towards excess, and she prepared everything in order to give way to it, while she awaited the opportunity of making me her accomplice. She was coaxing love to make it compliant, and to

succeed in mastering it, because her heart, enslaved by her senses, never reproached her. She likewise tried to deceive herself by endeavouring to forget that I might complain of having been surprised. She knew that to utter such a complaint I would have to acknowledge myself weaker or less courageous than she was, and she relied upon my being ashamed to make such a confession. I had no doubt whatever that the absence of the ambassador had been arranged and concerted beforehand. I could see still further, for it seemed evident to me that the two conspirators had foreseen that I would guess the artifice, and that, feeling stung to the quick, in spite of all my regrets, I would not shew myself less generous than they had been themselves. The ambassador having first procured me a delightful night, how could I refuse to let him enjoy as pleasant a one? My friends had argued very well, for, in spite of all the objections of my mind, I saw that I could not on my side put any obstacle in their way. C—— C—— was no impediment to them. They were certain of conquering her the moment she was not hindered by my presence. It rested entirely with M—— M——, who had perfect control over her. Poor girl! I saw her on the high road to debauchery, and it was my own doing! I sighed when I thought how little I had spared them in our last orgie, and what would become of me if both of them should happen to be, by my doing, in

such a position as to be compelled to run away from the convent? I could imagine both of them thrown upon my hands, and the prospect was not particularly agreeable. It would be an *embarras de richesse*. In this miserable contest between reason and prejudice, between nature and sentiment, I could not make up my mind either to go to the supper or to remain absent from it. "If I go," said I to myself, "that night will pass with perfect decency, but I shall prove myself very ridiculous, jealous, ungrateful, and even wanting in common politeness: if I remain absent, C—— C—— is lost, at least, in my estimation, for I feel that my love will no longer exist, and then good-bye to all idea of a marriage with her." In the perplexity of mind in which I found myself, I felt a want of something more certain than mere probabilities to base my decision upon. I put on my mask, and repaired to the mansion of the French ambassador. I addressed myself to the gate-keeper, saying that I had a letter for Versailles, and that I would thank him to deliver it to the courier when he went back to France with his excellency's dispatches.

"But, sir," answered the man, "we have not had a special courier for the last two months."

"What? Did not a special cabinet messenger arrive here last night?"

"Then he must have come in through the garret window or down the chimney, for, on the

word of an honest man, none entered through the gate."

"But the ambassador worked all night?"

"That may be, sir, but not here, for his excellency dined with the Spanish ambassador, and did not return till very late."

I had guessed rightly. I could no longer entertain any doubt. It was all over; I could not draw back without shame. C—— C—— must resist, if the game was distasteful to her; no violence would of course be offered to her. The die was cast!

Towards evening I went to the casino of Muran, and wrote a short note to M—— M——, requesting her to excuse me if some important business of M. de Bragadin's prevented me from spending the night with her and with our two friends, to whom I sent my compliments as well as my apologies. After that I returned to Venice, but in rather an unpleasant mood; to divert myself I went to the gaming table, and lost all night.

Two days afterwards, being certain that a letter from M—— M—— awaited me at Muran, I went over, and the door-keeper handed me a parcel in which I found a note from my nun and a letter from C—— C——, for everything was now in common between them.

Here is C—— C——'s letter:

"We were very sorry, dearest friend, when we heard that we should not have the happiness of

seeing you. My dear M—— M——'s friend came shortly afterwards, and when he read your note he likewise expressed his deep regret. We expected to have a very dull supper, but the witty sayings of that gentleman enlivened us, and you cannot imagine of what follies we were guilty after partaking of some champagne punch. Our friend had become as gay as ourselves, and we spent the night in trios, not very fatiguing, but very pleasant. I can assure you that that man deserves to be loved, but he must acknowledge himself inferior to you in everything. Believe me, dearest, I shall ever love you, and you must for ever remain the master of my heart."

In spite of all my vexation, that letter made me laugh, but the note of M—— M—— was much more singular. Here are the contents of it:

"I am certain, my own beloved, that you told a story out of pure politeness, but you had guessed that I expected you to do so. You have made our friend a splendid present in exchange for the one he made you when he did not object to his M—— M—— bestowing her heart upon you. You possess that heart entirely, dearest, and you would possess it under all circumstances, but how sweet it is to flavour the pleasures of love with the charms of friendship! I was sorry not to see you, but I knew that if you had come we would not have had much enjoyment; for our friend, notwith-

standing all his wit, is not exempt from some natural prejudices. As for C—— C——, her mind is now quite as free of them as our own, and I am glad she owes it to me. You must feel thankful to me for having completed her education, and for rendering her in every way worthy of you. I wish you had been hiding in the closet, where I am certain you would have spent some delightful hours. On Wednesday next I shall be yours, and all alone with you in your casino in Venice; let me know whether you will be at the usual hour near the statue of the hero Colleoni. In case you should be prevented, name any other day."

I had to answer those two letters in the same spirit in which they had been written, and in spite of all the bitter feelings which were then raging in my heart, my answers were to be as sweet as honey. I was in need of great courage, but I said to myself: *"George Dandin, tu l'as voulu!"* I could not refuse to pay the penalty of my own deeds, and I have never been able to ascertain whether the shame I felt was what is called shamefacedness. It is a problem which I leave to others.

In my letter to C—— C—— I had the courage, or the effrontery, to congratulate her, and to encourage her to imitate M—— M——, the best model, I said, I could propose to her.

I wrote to my nun that I would be punctual at the appointment near the statue, and amidst many false compliments, which ought to have betrayed

the true state of my heart, I told her that I admired the perfect education she had given to C—— C——, but that I congratulated myself upon having escaped the torture I should have suffered in the mysterious observatory, for I felt that I could not have borne it.

On the Wednesday I was punctual at the rendezvous, and I had not to wait long for M—— M——, who came disguised in male attire. "No theatre to-night," she said to me; "let us go to the *ridotto,* to lose or double our money." She had six hundred sequins. I had about one hundred. Fortune turned her back upon us, and we lost all. I expected that we would then leave that cut-throat place, but M—— M——, having left me for a minute, came back with three hundred sequins which had been given to her by her friend, whom she knew where to find. That money given by love or by friendship brought her luck for a short time, and she soon won back all we had lost, but in our greediness or imprudence we continued to play, and finally we lost our last sequin.

When we could play no loiger, M—— M—— said to me,—

"Now that we need not fear thieves, let us go to our supper."

That woman, religious and a Free-thinker, a libertine and gambler, was wonderful in all she did. She had just lost five hundred pounds, and she was as completely at her ease as if she had won

a very large sum. It is true that the money she had just lost had not cost her much.

As soon as we were alone, she found me sad and low-spirited, although I tried hard not to appear so, but, as for her, always the same, she was handsome, brilliant, cheerful, and amorous.

She thought she would bring back my spirits by giving me the fullest particulars of the night she had passed with C—— C—— and her friend, but she ought to have guessed that she was going the wrong way. That is a very common error, it comes from the mind, because people imagine that what they feel themselves others must feel likewise.

I was on thorns, and I tried everything to avoid that subject, and to lead the conversation into a different channel, for the amorous particulars, on which she was dwelling with apparent delight, vexed me greatly, and spite causing coldness, I was afraid of not playing my part very warmly in the amorous contest which was at hand. When a lover doubts his own strength, he may almost always be sure that he will fail in his efforts.

After supper we went to bed in the alcove, where the beauty, the mental and physical charms, the grace and the ardour of my lovely nun, cast all my bad temper to the winds, and soon restored me to my usual good spirits. The nights being shorter we spent two hours in the most delightful pleasures, and then parted, satisfied and full of love.

Before leaving, M—— M—— asked me to go

to her casino, to take some money and to play, taking her for my partner. I did so. I took all the gold I found, and playing the martingale, and doubling my stakes continuously, I won every day during the remainder of the carnival. I was fortunate enough never to lose the sixth card, and, if I had lost it, I should have been without money to play, for I had two thousand sequins on that card. I congratulated myself upon having increased the treasure of my dear mistress, who wrote to me that, for the sake of civility, we ought to have a supper *en partie carrée* on Shrove Monday. I consented.

That supper was the last I ever had in my life with C—— C——. She was in excellent spirits, but I had made up my mind, and as I paid all my attentions to M—— M——, C—— C——- imitated my example without difficulty, and she devoted herself wholly to her new lover.

Foreseeing that we would, a little later, be all of us in each other's way, I begged M—— M—— to arrange everything so that we could be apart, and she contrived it marvellously well.

After supper, the ambassador proposed a game of faro, which our beauties did not know; he called for cards, and placed one hundred louis on the table before him; he dealt, and took care to make C—— C—— win the whole of that sum. It was the best way to make her accept it as pin-money. The young girl, dazzled by so much gold, and not

knowing what to do with it, asked her friend to take care of it for her until such time as she should leave the convent to get married.

When the game was over, M—— M—— complained of a headache, and said that she would go to bed in the alcove: she asked me to come and lull her to sleep. We thus left the new lovers free to be as gay as they chose. Six hours afterwards, when the alarum warned us that it was time to part, we found them asleep in each other's embrace. I had myself passed an amorous and quiet night, pleased with M—— M——, and without giving one thought to C—— C——.

CHAPTER V

M. DE BERNIS GOES AWAY LEAVING ME THE USE OF HIS CASINO—HIS GOOD ADVICE: HOW I FOLLOW IT—PERIL OF M. M. AND MYSELF—MR. MURRAY, THE ENGLISH AMBASSADOR—SALE OF THE CASINO AND END OF OUR MEETINGS—SERIOUS ILLNESS OF M. M.—ZORZI AND CONDULMER—TONNIE.

Though the infidelities of C—— C—— made me look at her with other eyes than before, and I had now no intention of making her the companion of my life, I could not help feeling that it had rested with me to stop her on the brink of the stream, and I therefore considered it my duty always to be her friend.

If I had been more logical, the resolution I took with respect to her would doubtless have been of another kind. I should have said to myself: After seducing her, I myself have set the example of infidelity; I have bidden her to follow blindly the advice of her friend, although I knew that the advice and the example of M—— M—— would end in her ruin; I had insulted, in the most grievous

manner, the delicacy of my mistress, and that before her very eyes, and after all this how could I ask a weak woman to do what a man, priding himself on his strength, would shrink from attempting? I should have stood self-condemned, and have felt that it was my duty to remain the same to her, but flattering myself that I was overcoming mere prejudices, I was in fact that most degraded of slaves, he who uses his strength to crush the weak.

The day after Shrove Tuesday, going to the casino of Muran, I found there a letter from M—— M——, who gave me two pieces of bad news: that C—— C—— had lost her mother, and that the poor girl was in despair; and that the lay-sister, whose rheum was cured, had returned to take her place. Thus C—— C—— was deprived of her friend at a time when she would have given her consolation, of which she stood in great need. C—— C——, it seemed, had gone to share the rooms of her aunt, who, being very fond of her, had obtained permission from the superior. This circumstance would prevent the ambassador taking any more suppers with her, and I should have been delighted if chance had put this obstacle in his path a few days sooner.

All these misfortunes seemed of small account compared with what I was afraid of, for C—— C—— might have to pay the price for her pleasures, and I so far regarded myself as the origin of her unhappiness as to feel bound never to

abandon her, and this might have involved me in terrible complications.

M—— M—— asked me to sup with her and her lover on the following Monday. I went and found them both sad—he for the loss of his new mistress, and she because she had no longer a friend to make the seclusion of the convent pleasant.

About midnight M. de Bernis left us, saying in a melancholy manner that he feared he should be obliged to pass several months in Vienna on important diplomatic business. Before parting we agreed to sup together every Friday.

When we were alone M—— M—— told me that the ambassador would be obliged to me if in the future I would come to the casino two hours later. I understood that the good-natured and witty profligate had a very natural prejudice against indulging his amorous feelings except when he was certain of being alone.

M. de Bernis came to all our suppers till he left for Vienna, and always went away at midnight. He no longer made use of his hiding-place, partly because we now only lay in the recess, and partly because, having had time to make love before my arrival, his desires were appeased. M—— M—— always found me amorous. My love, indeed, was even hotter than it had been, since, only seeing her once a week and remaining faithful to her, I had always an abundant harvest to gather in. C——

C——'s letters which she brought to me softened me to tears, for she said that after the loss of her mother she could not count upon the friendship of any of her relations. She called me her sole friend, her only protector, and in speaking of her grief in not being able to see me any more whilst she remained in the convent, she begged me to remain faithful to her dear friend.

On Good Friday, when I got to the casino, I found the lovers overwhelmed with grief. Supper was served, but the ambassador, downcast and absent, neither ate nor spoke, and M—— M—— was like a statue that moves at intervals by some mechanism. Good sense and ordinary politeness prevented me from asking any questions, but on M—— M—— leaving us together, M. de Bernis told me that she was distressed, and with reason, since he was obliged to set out for Vienna fifteen days after Easter. "I may tell you confidentially," he added, "that I believe I shall scarcely be able to return, but she must not be told, as she would be in despair." M—— M—— came back in a few minutes, but it was easy to see that she had been weeping.

After some commonplace conversation, M. de Bernis, seeing M—— M—— still low-spirited, said,—

"Do not grieve thus, sweetheart, go I must, but my return is a matter of equal certainty when I have finished the important business which

summons me to Vienna. You will still have the casino, but, dearest, both friendship and prudence make me advise you not to come here in my absence, for after I have left Venice I cannot depend upon the faith of the gondoliers in my service, and I suspect our friend here cannot flatter himself on his ability to get reliable ones. I may also tell you that I have strong reasons for suspecting that our intercourse is known to the State Inquisitors, who conceal their knowledge for political reasons, but I fancy the secret would soon come to light when I am no longer here, and when the nun who connives at your departure from the convent knows that it is no longer for me that you leave it. The only people whom I would trust are the housekeeper and his wife. I shall order them, before I go, to look upon our friend here as myself, and you can make your arrangements with them. I trust all will go well till my return, if you will only behave discreetly. I will write to you under cover of the housekeeper, his wife will give you my letters as before, and in the same way you may reply. I must needs go, dearest one, but my heart is with you, and I leave you, till my return, in the hands of a friend, whom I rejoice to have known. He loves you, he has a heart and knowledge of the world, and he will not let you make any mistakes."

M—— M—— was so affected by what the ambassador had said that she entreated us to let

her go, as she wished to be alone and to lie down. As she went we agreed to sup together on the following Thursday.

As soon as we were alone the ambassador impressed me with the absolute necessity of concealing from her that he was going to return no more. "I am going," said he, "to work in concert with the Austrian cabinet on a treaty which will be the talk of Europe. I entreat you to write to me unreservedly, and as a friend, and if you love our common mistress, have a care for her honour, and above all have the strength of mind to resist all projects which are certain to involve you in misfortune, and which will be equally fatal to both. You know what happened to Madame de Riva, a nun in the convent of S——. She had to disappear after it became known that she was with child, and M. de Frulai, my predecessor, went mad, and died shortly after. J. J. Rousseau told me that he died of poison, but he is a visionary who sees the black side of everything. For my part, I believe that he died of grief at not being able to do anything for the unfortunate woman, who afterwards procured a dispensation from her vows from the Pope, and having got married is now living at Padua without any position in society.

"Let the prudent and loyal friend master the lover: go and see M—— M—— sometimes in the parlour of the convent, but not here, or the boat-

men will betray you. The knowledge which we both have that the girls are in a satisfactory condition is a great alleviation to my distress, but you must confess that you have been very imprudent. You have risked a terrible misfortune; consider the position you would have been in, for I am sure you would not have abandoned her. She had an idea that the danger might be overcome by means of drugs, but I convinced her that she was mistaken.

"In God's name, be discreet in the future, and write to me fully, for I shall always be interested in her fate, both from duty and sentiment."

We returned together to Venice, where we separated, and I passed the rest of the night in great distress. In the morning I wrote to the fair afflicted, and whilst endeavouring to console her to the best of my ability, I tried to impress on her the necessity for prudence and the avoidance of such escapades as might eventually ruin us.

Next day I received her reply, every word of which spelt despair. Nature had given her a disposition which had become so intensified by indulgence that the cloister was unbearable to her, and I foresaw the hard fights I should have to undergo.

We saw each other the Thursday after Easter, and I told her that I should not come to the casino before midnight. She had had four hours to pass with her lover in tears and regrets, amongst which she had often cursed her cruel fate and the foolish

resolution which made her take the veil. We supped together, and although the meal was a rich and delicate one we did it little honour. When we had finished, the ambassador left, entreating me to remain, which I did, without thinking at all of the pleasures of a party of two, for Love lighteth not his torch at the hearts of two lovers who are full of grief and sorrow. M—— M—— had grown thin, and her condition excited my pity and shut out all other feelings. I held her a long time in my arms, covering her with tender and affectionate kisses, but I shewed no intention of consoling her by amusements in which her spirit could not have taken part. She said, before we parted, that I had shewn myself a true lover, and she asked me to consider myself from henceforth as her only friend and protector.

Next week, when we were together as usual, M. de Bernis called the housekeeper just before supper, and in his presenc excuted a deed in my behalf, which he made him sign. In this document he transferred to me all rights over the contents of the casino, and charged him to consider me in all things as his master.

We arranged to sup together two days after, to make our farewells, but on my arrival I found M—— M—— by herself, standing up, and pale as death, or rather as white as a statue of Carrara marble.

"He is gone," she said, "and he leaves me to

your care. Fatal being, whom perchance I shall see no more, whom I thought I loved but as a friend, now you are lost to me I see my mistake. Before I knew him I was not happy, but neither was I unhappy as I now am."

I passed the whole night beside her, striving by the most delicate attentions to soften her grief, but without success. Her character, as abandoned to sorrow as to pleasure, was displayed to me during that long and weary night. She told me at what hour I should come to the convent parlour, the next day, and on my arrival I was delighted to find her not quite so sad. She shewed me a letter which her lover had written to her from Trevisa, and she then told me that I must come and see her twice a week, warning me that she would be accompanied sometimes by one nun and sometimes by another, for she foresaw that my visits would become the talk of the convent, as soon as it became known that I was the individual who used to go to mass at their church. She therefore told me to give in another name, to prevent C—— C——'s aunt from becoming suspicious.

"Nevertheless," she added, "this will not prevent my coming alone when I have any matter of importance to communicate to you. Promise me, sweetheart, to sup and sleep at the casino at least once a week, and write me a note each time by the housekeeper's wife."

I made no difficulty in promising her that much.

We thus passed a fortnight quietly enough, as she was happy again, and her amorous inclinations had returned in full force. About this time she gave me a piece of news which delighted me—namely, that C—— C—— had no longer anything to fear.

Full of amorous wishes and having to be content with the teazing pleasure of seeing one another through a wretched grating, we racked our brains to find out some way to be alone together to do what we liked, without any risk.

"I am assured," she said, "of the good faith of the gardener's sister. I can go out and come in without fear of being seen, for the little door leading to the convent is not overlooked by any window—indeed it is thought to be walled up. Nobody can see me crossing the garden to the little stream, which is considered unnavigable. All we want is a one-oared gondola, and I cannot believe that with the help of money you will be unable to find a boatman on whom we may rely."

I understood from these expressions that she suspected me of becoming cold towards her, and this suspicion pierced me to the heart.

"Listen," said I, "I will be the boatman myself. I will come to the quay, pass by the little door, and you shall lead me to your room where I will pass the whole night with you, and the day, too, if you think you can hide me."

"That plan," said she, "makes me shudder.

I tremble at the danger to which you might be exposed. No, I should be too unfortunate if I were to be the cause of your misfortune, but, as you can row, come in the boat, let me know the time as closely as possible; the trusty woman will be on the watch, and I will not keep you four minutes waiting. I will get into the boat, we will go to our beloved casino, and then we shall be happy without fearing anything."

"I will think it over."

The way I took to satisfy her was as follows: I bought a small boat, and without telling her I went one night all by myself round the island to inspect the walls of the convent on the side of the lagune. With some difficulty I made out a little door, which I judged to be the only one by which she could pass, but to go from there to the casino was no small matter, since one was obliged to fetch a wide course, and with one oar I could not do the passage in less than a quarter of an hour, and that with much toil. Nevertheless, feeling sure of success, I told my pretty nun of the plan, and never was news received with so much pleasure. We set our watches together, and fixed our meeting for the Friday following.

On the day appointed, an hour before sunset, I betook myself to St. Francis de la Vigne, where I kept my boat, and having set it in order and dressed myself as a boatman, I got upon the poop and held a straight course for the little door, which

opened the moment I arrived. M—— M—— came out wrapped in a cloak, and someone shutting the door after her she got on board my frail bark, and in a quarter of an hour we were at the casino. M—— M—— made haste to go in, but I stayed to belay my boat with a lock and chain against thieves, who pass the night pleasantly by stealing whatever they can lay hands on.

Though I had rowed easily enough, I was in a bath of perspiration, which, however, by no means hindered my charming mistress from falling on my neck; the pleasure of meeting seemed to challenge her love, and, proud of what I had done, I enjoyed her transports.

Not dreaming that I should have any occasion for a change of linen, I had brought none with me, but she soon found a cure for this defect; for after having undressed me she dried me lovingly, gave me one of her smocks, and I found myself dressed to admiration.

We had been too long deprived of our amorous pleasures to think of taking supper before we had offered a plenteous sacrifice to love. We spent two hours in the sweetest of intoxications, our bliss seeming more acute than at our first meeting. In spite of the fire which consumed me, in spite of the ardour of my mistress, I was sufficiently master of myself to disappoint her at the critical moment, for the picture which our friend had drawn was always before my eyes. M—— M——, joyous and

wanton, having me for the first time in the character of boatman, augmented our delights by her amorous caprices, but it was useless for her to try to add fuel to my flame, since I loved her better than myself.

The night was short, for she was obliged to return at three in the morning, and it struck one as we sat down to table. As the climax of ill luck a storm came on whilst we were at supper. Our hair stood on end; our only hope was founded in the nature of these squalls, which seldom last more than an hour. We were in hopes, also, that it would not leave behind it too strong a wind, as is sometimes the case, for though I was strong and sturdy I was far from having the skill or experience of a professional boatman.

In less than half an hour the storm became violent, one flash of lightning followed another, the thunder roared, and the wind grew to a gale. Yet after a heavy rain, in less than an hour, the sky cleared, but there was no moon, it being the day after the Ascension. Two o'clock struck. I put my head out at the window, but perceive that a contrary gale is blowing.

Ma tiranno del mar Libecchio resta.

This *Libecchio* which Ariosto calls—and with good reason—the tyrant of the sea, is the south-westerly wind, which is commonly called *Garbin* at Venice. I said nothing, but I was frightened. I told

my sweetheart that we must needs sacrifice an hour of pleasure, since prudence would have it so.

"Let us set out forthwith, for if the gale gets stronger I shall not be able to double the island."

She saw my advice was not to be questioned, and taking the key of her strong box, whence she desired to get some money, she was delighted to find her store increased fourfold. She thanked me for having told her nothing about it, assuring me she would have of me nothing but my heart, and following me she got into my boat and lay down at full length so as not to hinder its motion, I got upon the poop, as full of fear as courage, and in five minutes I had the good luck to double the point. But there it was that the tyrant was waiting for me, and it was not long before I felt that my strength would not outlast that of the winds. I rowed with all my strength, but all I could do was to prevent my boat from going back. For half an hour I was in this pitiful state, and I felt my strength failing without daring to say a word. I was out of breath, but could not rest a moment, since the least relaxation would have let the boat slip a far way back, and this would have been a distance hard to recover. M—— M—— lay still and silent, for she perceived I had no breath wherewith to answer her. I began to give ourselves up as lost.

At that instant I saw in the distance a barque coming swiftly towards us. What a piece of luck!

I waited till she caught us up, for if I had not done so I should not have been able to make myself heard, but as soon as I saw her at my left hand, twelve feet off, I shouted, "Help! I will give two sequins!"

They lowered sail and came towards me, and on their hailing me I asked for a man to take us to the opposite point of the island. They asked a sequin in advance, I gave it them, and promised the other to the man who would get on my poop and help me to make the point. In less than ten minutes we were opposite to the little stream leading to the convent, but the secret of it was too dear to be hazarded, so as soon as we reached the point I paid my preserver and sent him back. Henceforth the wind was in our favour, and we soon got to the little door, where M—— M—— landed, saying to me, "Go and sleep in the casino." I thought her advice wise, and I followed it, and having the wind behind me I got to the casino without trouble, and slept till broad day. As soon as I had risen I wrote to my dear mistress that I was well, and that we should see each other at the grating. Having taken my boat back to St. Francis, I put on my mask and went to Liston.

In the morning M—— M—— came to the grating by herself, and we made all such observations as our adventures of the night would be likely to suggest, but in place of deciding to follow

the advice which prudence should have given us—namely, not to expose ourselves to danger for the future, we thought ourselves extremely prudent in resolving that if we were again threatened by a storm we would set out as soon as we saw it rising. All the same we had to confess that if chance had not thrown the barque in our way we should have been obliged to return to the casino, for M—— M—— could not have got to the convent, and how could she ever have entered its walls again? I should have been forced to leave Venice with her, and that for ever. My life would have been finally and irretrievably linked with hers, and, without doubt, the various adventures which at the age of seventy-two years impel me to write these Memoirs, would never have taken place.

For the next three months we continued to meet each other once a week, always amorous, and never disturbed by the slightest accidents.

M—— M—— could not resist giving the ambassador a full account of our adventures, and I had promised to write to him, and always to write the whole truth. He replied by congratulating us on our good fortune, but he prophesied inevitable disaster if we had not the prudence to stop our intercourse.

Mr. Murray, the English ambassador, a witty and handsome man, and a great amateur of the fair sex, wine, and good cheer, then kept the fair Ancilla, who introduced me to him. This fine fellow became

my friend in much the same way as M. de Bernis, the only difference being that the Frenchman liked to look on while the Englishman preferred to give the show. I was never unwelcome at their amorous battles, and the voluptuous Ancilla was delighted to have me for a witness. I never gave them the pleasure of mingling in the strife. I loved M—— M——, but I should avow that my fidelity to her was not entirely dependent on my love. Though Ancilla was handsome she inspired me with repugnance, for she was always hoarse, and complained of a sharp pain in the throat, and though her lover kept well, I was afraid of her, and not without cause, for the disease which ended the days of Francis I. of France brought her to the grave in the following autumn. A quarter of an hour before she died, her brave Briton, yielding to the lascivious requests of this new Messalina, offered in my presence the last sacrifice, in spite of a large sore on her face which made her look hideous.

This truly heroic action was known all over the town, and it was Murray himself who made it known, citing me as his witness.

This famous courtezan, whose beauty was justly celebrated, feeling herself eaten away by an internal disease, promised to give a hundred louis to a doctor named Lucchesi, who by dint of mercury undertook to cure her, but Ancilla specified on the agreement that she was not to pay the aforesaid

sum till Lucchesi had offered with her an amorous sacrifice.

The doctor having done his business as well as he could wished to be paid without submitting to the conditions of the treaty, but Ancilla held her ground, and the matter was brought before a magistrate.

In England, where all agreements are binding, Ancilla would have won her case, but at Venice she lost it.

The judge, in giving sentence, said a condition, criminal *per se,* not fulfilled, did not invalidate an agreement—a sentence abounding in wisdom, especially in this instance.

Two months before this woman had become disgusting, my friend M. Memmo, afterwards procurator, asked me to take him to her house. In the height of the conversation, what should come but a gondola, and we saw Count Rosemberg, the ambassador from Vienna, getting out of it. M. Memmo was thunderstruck (for a Venetian noble conversing with a foreign ambassador becomes guilty of treason to the state), and ran in hot haste from Ancilla's room, I after him, but on the stair he met the ambassador, who, seeing his distress, burst into a laugh, and passed on. I got directly into M. Memmo's gondola, and we went forthwith to M. Cavalli, secretary to the State Inquisitors. M. Memmo could have taken no better course to avoid the troublesome consequences which

this fatal meeting might have had, and he was very glad that I was with him to testify to his innocence and to the harmlessness of the occurrence.

M. Cavalli received M. Memmo with a smile, and told him he did well to come to confession without wasting any time. M. Memmo, much astonished at this reception, told him the brief history of the meeting, and the secretary replied with a grave air that he had no doubt as to the truth of his story, as the circumstances were in perfect correspondence with what he knew of the matter.

We came away extremely puzzled at the secretary's reply, and discussed the subject for some time, but then we came to the conclusion that M. Cavalli could have had no positive knowledge of the matter before we came, and that he only spoke as he did from the instinct of an Inquisitor, who likes it to be understood that nothing is hid from him for a moment.

After the death of Ancilla, Mr. Murray remained without a titular mistress, but, fluttering about like a butterfly, he had, one after another, the prettiest girls in Venice. This good-natured Epicurean set out for Constantinople two years later, and was for twenty years the ambassador of the Court of St. James at the Sublime Porte. He returned to Venice in 1778 with the intention of ending his days there, far from affairs of state, but he died

in the lazaretto eight days before the completion of his quarantine.

At play fortune continued to favour me; my commerce with M—— M—— could not be discovered now that I was my own waterman; and the nuns who were in the secret were too deply involved not to keep it. I led them a merry life, but I foresaw that as soon as M. de Bernis decided to let M—— M—— know that he would not return to Venice, he would recall his people, and we should then have the casino no longer. I knew, besides, that when the rough season came on it would be impossible for me by myself to continue our voyages.

The first Monday in October, when the theatres are opened and masks may be worn, I went to St. Francis to get my boat, and thence to Muran for my mistress, afterwards making for the casino. The nights were now long enough for us to have ample time for enjoyment, so we began by making an excellent supper, and then devoted ourselves to the worship of Love and Sleep. Suddenly, in the midst of a moment of ecstacy, I heard a noise in the direction of the canal, which aroused my suspicions, and I rushed to the window. What was my astonishment and anger to see a large boat taking mine in tow! Nevertheless, without giving way to my passion, I shouted to the robbers that I would give them ten sequins if they would be kind enough to return me my boat.

A shout of laughter was all the reply they made, and not believing what I said they continued their course. What was I to do? I dared not cry, "Stop thief!" and not being endued with the power of walking on the water dry-footed, I could not give chase to the robbers. I was in the utmost distress, and for the moment M—— M—— shewed signs of terror, for she did not see how I could remedy this disaster.

I dressed myself hastily, giving no more thoughts to love, my only comfort being that I had still two hours to get the indispensable boat, should it cost me a hundred sequins. I should have been in no perplexity if I had been able to take one, but the gondoliers would infallibly make proclamation over the whole of Muran that they had taken a nun to such a convent, and all would have been lost.

The only way, then, that was open to me was either to buy a boat or to steal one. I put my pistols and dagger in my pocket, took some money, and with an oar on my shoulder set out.

The robbers had filed the chain of my boat with a silent file; this I could not do, and I could only reckon on having the good luck to find a boat moored with cords.

Coming to the large bridge I saw boats and to spare, but there were people on the quay, and I would not risk taking one. Seeing a tavern open at the end of the quay I ran like a madman, and asked if there were any boatmen there; the drawer

told me there were two, but that they were drunk. I came up to them, and said, "Who will take me to Venice for eighty sous?"

"I," and "I"; and they began to quarrel as to who should go. I quieted them by giving forty sous to the more drunken of the two, and I went out with the other.

As soon as we were on our way, I said,—

"You are too drunk to take me, lend me your boat, and I will give it you back to-morrow."

"I don't know you."

"I will deposit ten sequins, but your boat is not worth that. Who will be your surety?"

He took me back to the tavern, and the drawer went bail for him. Well pleased, I took my man to the boat, and having furnished it with a second oar and two poles he went away, chuckling at having made a good bargain, while I was as glad to have had the worst of it. I had been an hour away, and on entering the casino found my dear M—— M—— in an agony, but as soon as she saw my beaming face all the laughter came back on hers. I took her to the convent, and then went to St. Francis, where the keeper of the boat-house looked as if he thought me a fool, when I told him that I had trucked away my boat for the one I had with me. I put on my mask, and went forthwith to my lodging and to bed, for these annoyances had been too much for me.

About this time my destiny made me ac-

quainted with a nobleman called Mark Antony Zorzi, a man of parts and famous for his skill in writing verses in the Venetian dialect. Zorzi, who was very fond of the play, and desired to offer a sacrifice to Thalia, wrote a comedy which the audience took the liberty of hissing; but having persuaded himself that his piece only failed through the conspiracies of the Abbé Chiari, who wrote for the Theatre of St. Angelo, he declared open war against all the abbé's plays.

I felt no reluctance whatever to visit M. Zorzi, for he possessed an excellent cook and a charming wife. He knew that I did not care for Chiari as an author, and M. Zorzi had in his pay people who, without pity, rhyme, or reason, hissed all the compositions of the ecclesiastical playwright. My part was to criticise them in *hammer* verses—a kind of doggerel then much in fashion, and Zorzi took care to distribute my lucubrations far and wide. These manœuvres made me a powerful enemy in the person of M. Condulmer, who liked me none the better for having all the appearance of being in high favour with Madame Zorzi, to whom before my appearance he had paid diligent court. This M. Condulmer was to be excused for not caring for me, for, having a large share in the St. Angelo Theatre, the failure of the abbé's pieces was a loss to him, as the boxes had to be let at a very low rent, and all men are governed by interested motives.

This M. Condulmer was sixty years old, but with all the greenness of youth he was still fond of women, gaming, and money, and he was, in fact, a money-lender, but he knew how to pass for a saint, as he took care to go to mass every morning at St. Mark's, and never omitted to shed tears before the crucifix. The following year he was made a councillor, and in that capacity he was for eight months a State Inquisitor. Having thus attained this diabolically-eminent, or eminently-diabolical, position, he had not much difficulty in shewing his colleagues the necessity of putting me under The Leads as a disturber of the peace of the Republic. In the beginning of the winter the astounding news of the treaty between France and Austria was divulged—a treaty by which the political balance was entirely readjusted, and which was received with incredulity by the Powers. The whole of Italy had reason to rejoice, for the treaty guarded that fair land from becoming the theatre of war on the slightest difference which might arise between the two Powers. What astonished the most acute was that this wonderful treaty was conceived and carried out by a young ambassador who had hitherto been famed only as a wit. The first foundations had been laid in 1750 by Madame de Pompadour, Count Kaunitz (who was created a prince), and M. l'Abbé de Bernis, who was not known till the following year, when the king made him ambassador to Venice. The

House of Bourbon and the House of Hapsburg had been foes for two hundred and forty years when this famous treaty was concluded, but it only lasted for forty years, and it is not likely that any treaty will last longer between two courts so essentially opposed to one another.

The Abbé de Bernis was created minister for foreign affairs some time after the ratification of the treaty; three years after he re-established the parliament, became a cardinal, was disgraced, and finally sent to Rome, where he died. *Mors ultima linea rerum est.*

Affairs fell out as I had foreseen, for nine months after he left Venice he conveyed to M—— M—— the news of his recall, though he did it in the most delicate manner. Nevertheless, M—— M—— felt the blow so severely that she would very possibly have succumbed, had I not been preparing her for it in every way I could think of. M. de Bernis sent me all instructions.

He directed that all the contents of the casino should be sold and the proceeds given to M—— M——, with the exception of the books and prints which the housekeeper was ordered to bring to Paris. It was a nice breviary for a cardinal, but would to God they had nothing worse!

Whilst M—— M—— abandoned herself to grief I carried out the orders of M. de Bernis, and by the middle of January we had no longer a casino. She kept by her two thousand sequins

and her pearls, intending to sell them later on to buy herself an annuity.

We were now only able to see each other at the grating; and soon, worn with grief, she fell dangerously ill, and on the 2nd of February I recognized in her features the symptoms of approaching death. She sent me her jewel-case, with all her diamonds and nearly all her money, all the scandalous books she possessed, and all her letters, telling me that if she did not die I was to return her the whole, but that all belonged to me if, as she thought, she should succumb to the disease. She also told me that C—— C—— was aware of her state, and asked me to take pity on her and write to her, as my letters were her only comfort, and that she hoped to have strength to read them till her latest breath.

I burst into tears, for I loved her passionately, and I promised her to come and live in Muran until she recovered her health.

Having placed the property in a gondola, I went to the Bragadin Palace to deposit it, and then returned to Muran to get Laura to find me a furnished room where I could live as I liked. "I know of a good room, with meals provided," she said; "you will be quite comfortable and will get it cheaply, and if you like to pay in advance, you need not even say who you are. The old man to whom the house belongs lives on the ground floor; he will give you all the keys and if you like you need see no one."

She gave me the address, and I went there on the spot, and having found everything to my liking I paid a month in advance and the thing was done. It was a little house at the end of a blind alley abutting on the canal. I returned to Laura's house to tell her that I wanted a servant to get my food and to make my bed, and she promised to get me one by the next day.

Having set all in order for my new lodging, I returned to Venice and packed my mails as if I were about to make a long journey. After supper I took leave of M. de Bragadin and of his two friends, telling them that I was going to be away for several weeks on important business.

Next day, going to my new room, I was surprised to find there Tonine, Laura's daughter, a pretty girl not more than fifteen years old, who told me with a blush, but with more spirit than I gave her credit for, that she would serve me as well as her mother would have done.

I was in too much distress to thank Laura for this pretty present, and I even determined that her daughter should not stay in my service. We know how much such resolutions are commonly worth. In the meanwhile I was kind to the girl: "I am sure," I said, "of your goodwill, but I must talk to your mother. I must be alone," I added, "as I have to write all day, and I shall not take anything till the evening." She then gave me a letter, begging pardon for not having given it

me sooner. "You must never forgot to deliver messages," I said, "for if you had waited any longer before bringing me this letter, it might have had the most serious consequences." She blushed, begged pardon, and went out of the room. The letter was from C—— C——, who told me that her friend was in bed, and that the doctor had pronounced her illness to be fever. I passed the rest of the day in putting my room in order, and in writing to C—— C—— and her suffering friend.

Towards evening Tonine brought in the candles, and told me that my supper was ready. "Follow me," I said. Seeing that she had only laid supper for one—a pleasing proof of her modesty, I told her to get another knife and fork, as I wished her always to take her meals with me. I can give no account of my motives. I only wished to be kind to her, and I did everything in good faith. By and by, reader, we shall see whether this is not one of the devices by which the devil compasses his ends.

Not having any appetite, I ate little, but I thought everything good with the exception of the wine; but Tonine promised to get some better by the next day, and when supper was over she went to sleep in the ante-room.

After sealing my letters, wishing to know whether the outer door was locked, I went out and saw Tonine in bed, sleeping peacefully, or pre-

tending to do so. I might have suspected her thoughts, but I had never been in a similar situation, and I measured the extremity of my grief by the indifference with which I looked at this girl; she was pretty, but for all that I felt that neither she nor I ran any risk.

Next day, waking very early, I called her, and she came in neatly dressed. I gave her my letter to C—— C——, which enclosed the letter to M—— M——, telling her to take it to her mother and then to return to make my coffee.

"I shall dine at noon, Tonine," I said, "take care to get what is necessary in good time."

"Sir, I prepared yesterday's supper myself, and if you like I can cook all your meals."

"I am satisfied with your abilities, go on, and here is a sequin for expenses."

"I still have a hundred and twenty sous remeaning from the one you gave me yesterday, and that will be enough."

"No, they are for yourself, and I shall give you as much every day."

Her delight was so great that I could not prevent her covering my hand with kisses. I took care to draw it back and not to kiss her in return, for I felt as if I should be obliged to laugh, and this would have dishonoured my grief.

The second day passed like the first. Tonine was glad that I said no more about speaking to her mother, and drew the conclusion that her services

were agreeable to me. Feeling tired and weak, and fearing that I should not wake early enough to send the letter to the convent, but not wishing to rouse Tonine if she were asleep, I called her softly. She rose immediately and came into my room with nothing on but a slight petticoat. Pretending to see nothing, I gave her my letter, and told her to take it to her mother in the morning before she came into my room. She went out, saying that my instructions should be carried out, but as soon as she was gone I could not resist saying to myself that she was very pretty; and I felt both sad and ashamed at the reflection that this girl could very easily console me. I hugged my grief, and I determined to separate myself from a being who made me forget it.

"In the morning," I said, "I will tell Laura to get me something less seducing;" but the night brought counsel, and in the morning I put on the armour of sophism, telling myself that my weakness was no fault of the girl's, and that it would therefore be unjust to punish her for it. We shall see, dear reader, how all this ended.

CHAPTER VI

CONTINUES THE PRECEDING CHAPTER—M. M. RECOVERS—I RETURN TO VENICE—TONINE CONSOLES ME—DECREASE OF MY LOVE FOR M. M.—DOCTOR RIGHELINI—CURIOUS CONVERSATION WITH HIM—HOW THIS CONVERSATION AFFECTED M. M.—MR. MURRAY UNDECEIVED AND AVENGED.

Tonine had what is called tact and common sense, and thinking these qualities were required in our economy she behaved with great delicacy, not going to bed before receiving my letters, and never coming into my room except in a proper dress, and all this pleased me. For a fortnight M—— M—— was so ill that I expected every moment to hear the news of her death. On Shrove Tuesday C—— C—— wrote that her friend was not strong enough to read my letter, and that she was going to receive extreme unction. This news so shocked me that I could not rise, and passed the whole day in weeping and writing, Tonine not leaving me till midnight. I could not sleep. On Ash Wednesday I got a letter, in which C—— C—— told me that

the doctor had no hopes for her friend, and that he only gave her a fortnight to live. A low fever was wasting her away, her weakness was extreme, and she could scarcely swallow a little broth. She had also the misfortune to be harassed by her confessor, who made her foretaste all the terrors of death. I could only solace my grief by writing, and Tonine now and again made bold to observe that I was cherishing my grief, and that it would be the death of me. I knew myself that I was making my anguish more poignant, and that keeping to my bed, continued writing, and no food, would finally drive me mad. I had told my grief to poor Tonine, whose chief duty was to wipe away my tears. She had compassion on me.

A few days later, after assuring C—— C—— that if our friend died I should not survive her, I asked her to tell M—— M—— that if she wanted me to take care of my life she must promise to let me carry her off on her recovery.

"I have," I said, "four thousand sequins and her diamonds, which are worth six thousand; we should, therefore, have a sufficient sum to enable us to live honourably in any part of Europe."

C—— C—— wrote to me on the following day, and said that my mistress, after hearing my letter read, had fallen into a kind of convulsion, and, becoming delirious, she talked incessantly in French for three whole hours in a fashion which would have made all the nuns take to their heels, if they

had understood her. I was in despair, and was nearly raving as wildly as my poor nun. Her delirium lasted three days, and as soon as she got back her reason she charged her young friend to tell me that she was sure to get well if I promised to keep to my word, and to carry her off as soon as her health would allow. I hastened to reply that if I lived she might be sure my promise would be fulfilled.

Thus continuing to deceive each other in all good faith, we got better, for every letter from C—— C——, telling me how the convalescence of her friend was progressing, was to me as balm. And as my mind grew more composed my appetite also grew better, and my health improving day by day, I soon, though quite unconsciously, began to take pleasure in the simple ways of Tonine, who now never left me at night before she saw that I was asleep.

Towards the end of March M—— M—— wrote to me herself, saying that she believed herself out of danger, and that by taking care she hoped to be able to leave her room after Easter. I replied that I should not leave Muran till I had the pleasure of seeing her at the grating, where, without hurrying ourselves, we could plan the execution of our scheme.

It was now seven weeks since M. de Bragadin had seen me, and thinking that he would be getting anxious I resolved to go and see him that very

day. Telling Tonine that I should not be back till the evening, I started for Venice without a cloak, for having gone to Muran masked I had forgotten to take one. I had spent forty-eight days without going out of my room, chiefly in tears and distress, and without taking any food. I had just gone through an experience which flattered my self-esteem. I had been served by a girl who would have passed for a beauty anywhere in Europe. She was gentle, thoughtful, and delicate, and without being taxed with foppishness I think I may say that, if she was not in love with me, she was at all events inclined to please me to the utmost of her ability; for all that I had been able to withstand her youthful charms, and I now scarcely dreaded them. Seeing her every day, I had dispersed my amorous fancies, and friendship and gratitude seemed to have vanquished all other feelings, for I was obliged to confess that this charming girl had lavished on me the most tender and assiduous care. She had passed whole nights on a chair by my bedside, tending me like a mother, and never giving me the slightest cause for complaint.

Never had I given her a kiss, never had I allowed myself to undress in her presence, and never (with one exception) had she come into my room without being properly dressed. For all that, I knew that I had fought a battle, and I felt inclined to boast at having won the victory. There was only one circumstance that vexed me—namely, that

I was nearly certain that neither M—— M—— nor C—— C—— would consider such continence to be within the bounds of possibility, if they heard of it, and that Laura herself, to whom her daughter would tell the whole story, would be sceptical, though she might out of kindness pretend to believe it all.

I got to M. de Bragadin's just as the soup was being served. He welcomed me heartily, and was delighted at having foreseen that I should thus surprise them. Besides my two other old friends, there were De la Haye, Bavois, and Dr. Righelini at table.

"What! you without a cloak! said M. Dandolo.

"Yes," said I; "for having gone out with my mask on I forgot to bring one."

At this they laughed, and, without putting myself out, I sat down. No one asked where I had been so long, for it was understood that that question should be left to me to answer or not. Nevertheless, De la Haye, who was bursting with curiosity, could not refrain from breaking some jests on me.

"You have got so thin," said he, "that uncharitable people will be rather hard on you."

"I trust they will not say that I have been passing my time with the Jesuits."

"You are sarcastic. They may say, perhaps, that you have passed your time in a hot-house under the influence of Mercury."

"Don't be afraid, sir, for to escape this hasty judgement I shall go back this evening."

"No, no, I am quite sure you will not."

"Believe me, sir," said I, with a bantering tone, "that I deem your opinion of too much consequence not to be governed by it."

Seeing that I was in earnest, my friends were angry with him; and the Aristarchus was in some confusion.

Righelini, who was one of Murray's intimate friends, said to me in a friendly way that he had been longing to tell Murray of my re-appearance, and of the falsity of all the reports about me.

"We will go to sup with him," said I, "and I will return after supper."

Seeing that M. de Bragadin and his two friends were uneasy about me, I promised to dine with them on April 25th, St. Mark's Day.

As soon as Mr. Murray saw me, he fell on my neck and embraced me. He introduced me to his wife, who asked me to supper with great politeness. After Murray had told me the innumerable stories which had been made about my disappearance, he asked me if I knew a little story by the Abbé Chiari, which had come out at the end of the carnival. As I said that I knew nothing about it, he gave me a copy, telling me that I should like it. He was right. It was a satire in which the Zorzi clique was pulled to pieces, and in which I played a very poor part. I did not read it till some time after,

and in the mean time put it in my pocket. After a very good supper I took a gondola to return to Muran.

It was midnight and very dark, so that I did not perceive the gondola to be ill covered and in wretched order. A fine rain was falling when I got in, and the drops getting larger I was soon wet to the skin. No great harm was done, as I was close to my quarters. I groped my way upstairs and knocked at the door of the ante-room, where Tonine, who had not waited for me, was sleeping.

Awake in a moment she came to open the door in her smock, and without a light. As I wanted one, I told her to get the flint and steel, which she did, warning me in a modest voice that she was not dressed. "That's of no consequence," said I, "provided you are covered." She said no more, and soon lighted a candle, but she could not help laughing when she saw me dripping wet.

"I only want you, my dear," said I, "to dry my hair." She quickly set to work with powder and powder-puff in hand, but her smock was short and loose at the top, and I repented, rather too late, that I had not given her time to dress. I felt that all was lost, all the more as having to use both her hands she could not hold her smock and conceal two swelling spheres more seductive than the apples of the Hesperides. How could I help seeing them? I shut my eyes and, said "For shame!" but I gave in at last, and fixed such a hungry gaze upon poor

Tonine that she blushed. "Come," said I, "take your smock between your teeth and then I shall see no more." But it was worse than before, and I had only added fuel to the fire; for, as the veil was short, I could see the bases and almost the frieze of two marble columns; and at this sight I gave a voluptuous cry. Not knowing how to conceal everything from my gaze, Tonine let herself fall on the sofa, and I, my passions at fever-heat, stood beside her, not knowing what to do.

"Well," she said, "shall I go and dress myself and then do your hair?"

"No, come and sit on my knee, and cover my eyes with your hands."

She came obediently, but the die was cast, and my resistance overcome. I clasped her between my arms, and without any more thoughts of playing at blind man's buff I threw her on the bed and covered her with kisses. And as I swore that I would always love her, she opened her arms to receive me in a way that shewed how long she had been waiting for this moment.

I plucked the rose, and then, as ever, I thought it the rarest I had ever gathered since I had laboured in the harvest of the fruitful fields of love.

When I awoke in the morning I found myself more deeply in love with Tonine than I had been with any other woman. She had got up without waking me, but as soon as she heard me stirring

she came, and I tenderly chid her for not waiting for me to give her good morrow. Without answering she gave me M—— M——'s letter. I thanked her, but putting the letter on one side I took her in my arms, and set her by my side. "What a wonder!" cried Tonine. "You are not in a hurry to read that letter! Faithless man, why did you not let me cure you six weeks ago. How lucky I am; thanks to the rain! I do not blame you, dear, but love me as you love her who writes to you every day, and I shall be satisfied."

"Do you know who she is?"

"She lives in a boarding-house, and is as beautiful as an angel; but she is there, and I am here. You are my master, and I will be your servant as long as you like."

I was glad to leave her in error, and swore an everlasting love; but during our conversation she had let herself drop down in the bottom of the bed, and I entreated her to lie down again; but she said that on the contrary it was time for me to get up for dinner, for she wanted to give me a dainty meal cooked in the Venetian manner.

"Who is the cook?" said I.

"I am, and I have been using all my skill on it since five, when I got up."

"What time is it now, then?"

"Past one."

The girl astonished me. She was no longer the shy Tonine of last night; she had that exultant

air which happiness bestows, and the look of pleasure which the delights of love give to a young beauty. I could not understand how I had escaped from doing homage to her beauty when I first saw her at her mother's house. But I was then too deeply in love with C—— C——; I was in too great distress; and, moreover, Tonine was then unformed. I got up, and making her bring me a cup of coffee I asked her to keep the dinner back for a couple of hours.

I found M—— M——'s letter affectionate, but not so interesting as it would have been the day before. I set myself to answer it, and was almost thunderstruck to find the task, for the first time, a painful one. However, my short journey to Venice supplied me with talk which covered four pages.

I had an exquisite dinner with my charming Tonine. Looking at her as at the same time my wife, my mistress, and my housekeeper, I was delighted to find myself made happy at such a cheap rate. We spent the whole day at the table talking of our love, and giving each other a thousand little marks of it; for there is no such rich and pleasant matter for conversation as when they who talk are parties to an amorous suit. She told with charming simplicity that she knew perfectly well that she could not make me amorous of her, because I loved another, and that her only hope was therefore in a surprise, and that she had foreseen the

happy moment when I told her that she need not dress herself to light a candle.

Tonine was naturally quick-witted, but she did not know either how to read or to write. She was enchanted to see herself become rich (for she thought herself so) without a soul at Muran being able to breathe a word against her honour. I passed three weeks in the company of this delightful girl—weeks which I still reckon among the happiest of my life; and what embitters my old age is that, having a heart as warm as ever, I have no longer the strength necessary to secure a single day as blissful as those which I owed to this charming girl.

Towards the end of April I saw M—— M—— at the grating, looking thin and much changed, but out of danger. I therefore returned to Venice. In my interview, calling my attachment and tender feelings to my aid, I succeeded in behaving myself in such wise that she could not possibly detect the change which a new love had worked in my heart. I shall be, I trust, easily believed when I say that I was not imprudent enough to let her suspect that I had given up the idea of escaping with her, upon which she counted more than ever. I was afraid lest she should fall ill again, if I took this hope away from her. I kept my casino, which cost me little, and as I went to see M—— M—— twice a week I slept there on those occasions, and made love with my dashing Tonine.

Having kept my word with my friends by dining with them on St. Mark's Day, I went with Dr. Righelini to the parlour of the Vierges to see the taking of the veil.

The Convent of the Vierges is within the jurisdiction of the Doge, whom the nuns style "Most Serene Father." They all belong to the first families in Venice.

While I was praising the beauty of Mother M—— E—— to Dr. Righelini, he whispered to me that he could get her me for a money payment, if I were curious in the matter. A hundred sequins for her and ten sequins for the go-between was the price fixed on. He assured me that Murray had had her, and could have her again. Seeing my surprise, he added that there was not a nun whom one could not have by paying for her: that Murray had the courage to disburse five hundred sequins for a nun of Muran—a rare beauty, who was afterwards the mistress of the French ambassador.

Though my passion for M—— M—— was on the wane, I felt my heart gripped as by a hand of ice, and it was with the greatest difficulty that I made no sign. Notwithstanding, I took the story for an atrocious calumny, but yet the matter was too near my heart for me to delay in bringing it to light at the earliest opportunity. I therefore replied to Righelini in the calmest manner possible, that one or two nuns might be had for money, but

that it could happen very rarely on account of the difficulties in most convents.

"As for the nun of Muran, justly famous for her beauty, if she be M—— M——, nun of the convent . . . . , I not only disbelieve that Murray ever had her, but I am sure she was never the French ambassador's mistress. If he knew her it could only have been at the grating, where I really cannot say what happens."

Righelini, who was an honourable and spirited man, answered me coldly that the English ambassador was a man of his word, and that he had the story from his own lips.

"If Mr. Murray," he continued, "had not told it me under the seal of secrecy I would make him tell it you himself. I shall be obliged if you will take care that he never knows I told you of it."

"You may rely on my discretion."

The same evening, supping at Murray's casino with Righelini, having the matter at heart, and seeing before me the two men who could clear up everything to my satisfaction, I began to speak with enthusiasm of the beauty of M—— E——, whom I had seen at the Vierges.

Here the ambassador struck in, taking the ball on the hop:

"Between friends," said he, "you can get yourself the enjoyment of those charms, if you are willing to sacrifice a sum of money—not too much, either, but you must have the key."

"Do you think you have it?"

"No, I am sure; and had less trouble than you might suppose."

"If you are sure; I congratulate you, and doubt no more. I envy your fortune, for I don't believe a more perfect beauty could be found in all the convents of Venice."

"There you are wrong. Mother M—— M——, at ——— in Muran, is certainly handsomer."

"I have heard her talked of and I have seen her once, but I do not think it possible that she can be procured for money."

"I think so," said he, laughing, "and when I think I mostly have good reasons."

"You surprise me; but all the same I don't mind betting you are deceived."

"You would lose. As you have only seen her once, I suppose you would not recognize her portrait?"

"I should, indeed, as her face left a strong impression on my mind."

"Wait a minute."

He got up from the table, went out, and returned a minute after with a box containing eight or ten miniatures, all in the same style, namely, with hair in disorder and bare necks.

"These," said I, "are rare charms, with which you have doubtless a near acquaintance?"

"Yes, and if you recognize any of them be discreet."

"You need not be afraid. Here are three I recognize, and this looks like M—— M——; but confess that you may have been deceived—at least, that you did not have her in the convent or here, for there are women like her."

"Why do you think I have been deceived? I have had her here in her religious habit, and I have spent a whole night with her; and it was to her individually that I sent a purse containing five hundred sequins. I gave fifty to the good procurer."

"You have, I suppose, visited her in the parlour, after having her here?"

"No, never, as she was afraid her titular lover might hear of it. You know that was the French ambassador."

"But she only saw him in the parlour."

"She used to go to his house in secular dress whenever he wanted her. I was told that by the man who brought her here."

"Have you had her several times?"

"Only once and that was enough, but I can have her whenever I like for a hundred sequins."

"All that may be the truth, but I would wager five hundred sequins that you have been deceived."

"You shall have your answer in three days."

I was perfectly certain, I repeat, that the whole affair was a piece of knavery; but it was necessary to have it proved, and I shuddered when the thought came into my head that after all it might be a true

story. In this case I should have been freed from a good many obligations, but I was strongly persuaded of her innocence. At all events, if I were to find her guilty (which was amongst possible occurrences), I resigned myself to lose five hundred sequins as the price of this horrible discovery and addition to my experienve of life. I was full of restless anguish—the worst, perhaps, of the torments of the mind. If the honest Englishman had been the victim of a mystification, or rather knavery, my regard for M—— M——'s honour compelled me to find a way to undeceive him without compromising her; and such was my plan, and thus fortune favoured me.

Three or four days after, Mr. Murray told the doctor that he wished to see me. We went to him, and he greeted me thus:

"I have won; for a hundred sequins I can have the fair nun!"

"Alas!" said I, "there go my five hundred sequins."

"No, not five hundred, my dear fellow, for I should be ashamed to win so much of you, but the hundred she would cost me. If I win, you shall pay for my pleasure, and if I lose I shall give her nothing."

"How is the problem to be solved?"

"My Mercury tells me that we must wait for a day when masks are worn. He is endeavouring at present to find out a way to convince both of

us; for otherwise neither you nor I would feel compelled to pay the wager, and if I really have M—— M—— my honour would not allow me to let her suspect that I had betrayed the secret."

"No, that would be an unpardonable crime. Hear my plan, which will satisfy us both; for after it has been carried out each of us will be sure that he has fairly won or fairly lost."

"As soon as you have possessed yourself of the real or pretended nun, leave her on some pretext, and meet me in a place to be agreed upon. We will then go together to the convent, and I will ask for M—— M——. Will seeing her and speaking to her convince you that the woman you have left at home is a mere impostor?"

"Perfectly, and I shall pay my wager with the greatest willingness."

"I may say the same. If, when I summon M—— M—— to the parlour, the lay-sister tells us she is ill or busy, we will go, and the wager will be yours; you will sup with the fair, and I will go elsewhere."

"So be it; but since all this will be at night-time, it is possible that when you ask for her, the sister will tell you that no one can be seen at such an hour."

"Then I shall lose."

"You are quite sure, then, that if she be in the convent she will come down?"

"That's my business. I repeat, if you don't

speak to her, I shall hold myself to have lost a hundred sequins, or a thousand if you like."

"One can't speak plainer than that, my dear fellow, and I thank you beforehand."

"The only thing I ask you is to come sharp to time, and not to come too late for a convent."

"Will an hour after sunset suit you?"

"Admirably."

"I shall also make it my business to compel my masked mistress to stop where she is, even though it be M—— M—— herself."

"Some won't have long to wait, if you will take her to a casino which I myself possess at Muran, and where I secretly keep a girl of whom I am amorous. I will take care that she shall not be there on the appointed day, and I will give you the key of the casino. I shall also see that you find a delicate cold supper ready."

"That is admirable, but I must be able to point out the place to my Mercury."

"True! I will give you a supper to-morrow, the greatest secrecy to be observed between us. We will go to my casino in a gondola, and after supper we will go out by the street door; thus you will know the way by land and water. You will only have to tell the procurer the name of the canal and of the house, and on the day fixed you shall have the key. You will only find there an old man who lives on the ground floor, and he will see neither those who go out nor those who come in.

My sweetheart will see nothing and will not be seen; and all, trust me, will turn out well."

"I begin to think that I have lost my bet," said the Englishman, who was delighted with the plan; "but it matters not, I can gaily encounter either loss or gain." We made our appointment for the next day, and separated.

On the following morning I went to Muran to warn Tonine that I was going to sup with her, and to bring two of my friends; and as my English friend paid as great court to Bacchus as to Cupid, I took care to send my little housekeeper several bottles of excellent wine. Charmed with the prospect of doing the honours of the table, Tonine only asked me if my friends would go away after supper. I said yes, and this reply made her happy; she only cared for the dessert.

After leaving her I went to the convent and passed an hour with M—— M—— in the parlour. I was glad to see that she was getting back her health and her beauty every day, and having complimented her upon it I returned to Venice. In the evening my two friends kept their appointments to the minute, and we went to my little casino at two hours after sunset.

Our supper was delicious, and my Tonine charmed me with the gracefulness of her carriage. I was delighted to see Righelini enchanted, and the ambassador dumb with admiration. When I was in love I did not encourage my friends to cajole my

sweetheart, but I became full of complaisance when time had cooled the heat of my passion.

We parted about midnight, and having taken Mr. Murray to the spot where I was to wait for him on the day of trial, I returned to compliment my charming Tonine as she deserved. She praised my two friends, and could not express her surprise at seeing our English friend going away, fresh and nimble on his feet, notwithstanding his having emptied by himself six bottles of my best wine. Murray looked like a fine Bacchus after Rubens.

On Whit Sunday Righelini came to tell me that the English ambassador had made all arrangements with the pretended procurer of M—— M—— for Whit Tuesday. I gave him the keys of my abode at Muran, and told him to assure Murray that I would keep the appointment at the exact time arranged upon.

My impatience brought on palpitation of the heart, which was extremely painful, and I passed the two nights without closing an eye; for although I was convinced of M—— M——'s innocence, my agitation was extreme. But whence all this anxiety? Merely from a desire to see the ambassador undeceived. M—— M—— must in his eyes have seemed a common prostitute, and the moment in which he would be obliged to confess himself the victim of roguery would re-establish the honour of the nun.

Mr. Murray was as impatient as myself, with

this difference, that whereas he, looking upon the adventure as a comic one, only laughed, I who found it too tragic shuddered with indignation.

On Tuesday morning I went to Muran to tell Tonine to get a cold supper after my instructions, to lay the table for two, to get wax lights ready, and having sent in several bottles of wine I bade her keep to the room occupied by the old landlord, and not to come out till the people who were coming in the evening were gone. She promised to do so, and asked no questions. After leaving her I went to the convent parlour, and asked to see M—— M——. Not expecting to see me, she asked me why I had not gone to the pageant of the Bucentaur, which, the weather being favourable, would set out on this day. I do not know what I answered, but I know that she found my words little to the purpose. I came at last to the important point, and told her I was going to ask a favour of her, on which my peace of mind depended, but which she must grant blindly without asking any questions.

"Tell me what I am to do, sweetheart," said she, "and be sure I will refuse nothing which may be in my power."

"I shall be here this evening an hour after sunset, and ask for you at this grating; come. I shall be with another man, to whom I beg of you to say a few words of politeness; you can then leave us. Let us find some pretext to justify the unseasonable hour."

"I will do what you ask, but you cannot imagine how troublesome it is in a convent, for at six o'clock the parlours are shut up and the keys are taken to the abbess' room. However, as you only want me for five minutes, I will tell the abbess that I am expecting a letter from my brother, and that it can be sent to me on this evening only. You must give me a letter that the nun who will be with me may be able to say that I have not been guilty of deception."

"You will not come alone, then?"

"I should not dare even to ask for such a privilege."

"Very good, but try to come with some old nun who is short-sighted."

"I will keep the light in the background."

"Pray do not do so, my beloved; on the contrary, place it so that you may be distinctly seen."

"All this is very strange, but I have promised passive obedience, and I will come down with two lights. May I hope that you will explain this riddle to me at your next interview?"

"By to-morrow, at latest, you shall know the whole story."

"My curiosity will prevent me from sleeping."

"Not so, dear heart; sleep peacefully, and be sure of my gratitude."

The reader will think that after this conversation my heart was perfectly at rest; but how far

was I from resting! I returned to Venice, tortured lest I should be told in the evening at the door of the cathedral, where we were to meet, that the nun had been obliged to put off her appointment. If that had happened, I should not have exactly suspected M—— M——, but the ambassador would have thought that I had caused the scheme to miscarry. It is certain that in that case I should not have taken my man to the parlour, but should have gone there sadly by myself.

I passed the whole day in these torments, thinking it would never come to an end, and in the evening I put a letter in my pocket, and went to my post at the hour agreed upon.

Fortunately, Murray kept the appointment exactly.

"Is the nun there?" said I, as soon as he was near me.

"Yes, my dear fellow. We will go, if you like, to the parlour; but you will find that we shall be told she is ill or engaged. If you like, the bet shall be off."

"God forbid, my dear fellow! I cling to that hundred ducats. Let us be gone."

We presented ourselves at the wicket, and I asked for M—— M——, and the doorkeeper made me breathe again by saying that I was expected. I entered the parlour with my English friend, and saw that it was lighted by four candles. I cannot recall these moments without being in love with

life. I take note not only of my noble mistress's innocence, but also of the quickness of her wit. Murray remained serious, without a smile on his face. Full of grace and beauty, M—— M—— came into the room with a lay-sister, each of them holding a candlestick. She paid me a compliment in good French; I gave her the letter, and looking at the address and the seal she put it in her pocket. After thanking me and saying she would reply in due course, she turned towards my companion:

"I shall, perhaps, make you lose the first act of the opera," said she.

"The pleasure of seeing you, madam, is worth all the operas in the world."

"You are English, I think?"

"Yes, madam."

"The English are now the greatest people in the world, because they are free and powerful. Gentlemen, I wish you a very good evening."

I had never seen M—— M—— looking so beautiful as then, and I went out of the parlour ablaze with love, and glad as I had never been before. I walked with long strides towards my casino, without taking notice of the ambassador, who did not hurry himself in following me; I waited for him at my door.

"Well," said I, "are you convinced now that you have been cheated?"

"Be quiet, we have time enough to talk about that. Let us go upstairs."

"Shall I come?"

"Do. What do you think I could do by myself for four hours with that creature who is waiting for me? We will amuse ourselves with her."

"Had we not better turn her out?"

"No; her master is coming for her at two o'clock in the morning. She would go and warn him, and he would escape my vengeance. We will throw them both out of the window."

"Be moderate, for M—— M——'s honour depends on the secrecy we observe. Let us go upstairs. We shall have some fun. I should like to see the hussy."

Murray was the first to enter the room. As soon as the girl saw me, she threw her handkerchief over her face, and told the ambassador that such behaviour was unworthy of him. He made no answer. She was not so tall as M—— M——, and she spoke bad French. Her cloak and mask were on the bed, but she was dressed as a nun. As I wanted to see her face, I politely asked her to do me the favour of shewing it.

"I don't know you," said she; "who are you?"

"You are in my house, and don't know who I am?"

"I am in your house because I have been betrayed. I did not think that I should have to do with a scoundrel."

At this word Murray commanded her to be

silent, calling her by the name of her honourable business; and the slut got up to take her cloak, saying she would go. Murray pushed her back, and told her that she would have to wait for her worthy friend, warning her to make no noise if she wanted to keep out of prison.

"Put me in prison!"

With this she directed her hand towards her dress, but I rushed forward and seized one hand while Murray mastered the other. We pushed her back on a chair while we possessed ourselves of the pistols she carried in her pockets.

Murray tore away the front of her holy habit, and I extracted a stiletto eight inches long, the false nun weeping bitterly all the time.

"Will you hold your tongue, and keep quiet till Capsucefalo comes," said the ambassador, "or go to prison?"

"If I keep quiet what will become of me?"

"I promise to let you go."

"With him?"

"Perhaps."

"Very well, then, I will keep quiet."

"Have you got any more weapons?"

Hereupon the slut took off her habit and her petticoat, and if we had allowed her she would have soon been in a state of nature, no doubt in the expectation of our passions granting what our reason refused.

I was much astonished to find in her only a

false resemblance to M—— M——. I remarked as much to the ambassador, who agreed with me, but made me confess that most men, prepossessed with the idea that they were going to see M—— M——, would have fallen into the same trap. In fact, the longing to possess one's self of a nun who has renounced all the pleasures of the world, and especially that of cohabitation with the other sex, is the very apple of Eve, and is more delightful from the very difficulty of penetrating the convent grating.

Few of my readers will fail to testify that the sweetest pleasures are those which are hardest to be won, and that the prize, to obtain which one would risk one's life, would often pass unnoticed if it were freely offered without difficulty or hazard.

In the following chapter, dear reader, you will see the end of this farcical adventure. In the mean time, let us take a little breath.

CHAPTER VII

PLEASANT ENDING OF THE ADVENTURE OF THE FALSE NUN—M. M. FINDS OUT THAT I HAVE A MISTRESS —SHE IS AVENGED ON THE WRETCH CAPSUCEFALO —I RUIN MYSELF AT PLAY, AND AT THE SUGGESTION OF M. M. I SELL ALL HER DIAMONDS, ONE AFTER ANOTHER—I HAND OVER TONINE TO MURRAY, WHO MAKES PROVISION FOR HER—HER SISTER BARBERINE TAKES HER PLACE.

"How did you make this nice acquaintance?" I asked the ambassador.

"Six months ago," he replied, "while standing at the convent gate with Mr. Smith, our consul, in whose company I had been to see some ceremony or other, I remarked to him, as we were talking over some nuns we had noticed, 'I would gladly give five hundred sequins for a few hours of Sister M—— M——'s company.' Count Capsucefalo heard what I said, but made no remark. Mr. Smith answered that one could only see her at the grating as did the ambassador of France, who often came to visit her. Capsucefalo called on me the

next morning, and said that if I had spoken in good faith he was sure he could get me a night with the nun in whatever place I liked, if she could count on my secrecy. 'I have just been speaking to her,' said he, 'and on my mentioning your name she said she had noticed you with Mr. Smith, and vowed she would sup with you more for love than money. 'I,' said the rascal, 'am the only man she trusts, and I take her to the French ambassador's casino in Venice whenever she wants to go there. You need not be afraid of being cheated, as you will give the money to her personally when you have possessed yourself of her.' With this he took her portrait from his pocket and shewed it me; and here it is. I bought it of him two days after I believed myself to have spent a night with the charming nun, and a fortnight after our conversation. This beauty here came masked in a nun's habit, and I was fool enough to think I had got a treasure. I am vexed with myself for not having suspected the cheat—at all events, when I saw her hair, as I know that nuns' hair should be cut short. But when I said something about it to the hussy, she told me they were allowed to keep their hair under their caps, and I was weak enough to believe her."

I knew that on this particular Murray had not been deceived, but I did not feel compelled to tell him so then and there.

I held the portrait Murray had given me in my hand, and compared it with the face before me.

In the portrait the breast was bare, and as I was remarking that painters did those parts as best they could, the impudent wench seized the opportunity to shew me that the miniature was faithful to nature. I turned my back upon her with an expression of contempt which would have mortified her, if these creatures were ever capable of shame. As we talked things over, I could not help laughing at the axiom, *Things which are equal to the same thing are equal to one another,* for the miniature was like M—— M—— and like the courtezan, and yet the two women were not like each other. Murray agreed with me, and we spent an hour in a philosophical discussion on the matter. As the false M—— M— was named Innocente, we expressed a wish to know how her name agreed with her profession, and how the knave had induced her to play the part she had taken; and she told us the following story:

"I have known Count Capsucefalo for two years, and have found him useful, for, though he has given me no money, he has made me profit largely through the people he has introduced to me. About the end of last autumn he came to me one day, and said that if I could make up as a nun with some clothes he would get me, and in that character pass a night with an Englishman, I should be the better by five hundred sequins. 'You need not be afraid of anything,' said he, 'as I myself will take you to the casino where the dupe will be

awaiting you, and I will come and take you back to your imaginary convent towards the end of the night.' He shewed me how I must behave, and told me what to reply if my lover asked any questions about the discipline of the convent.

"I liked the plot, gentlemen, and I told him I was ready to carry it out. And be pleased to consider that there are not many women of my profession who would hesitate over a chance of getting five hundred sequins. Finding the scheme both agreeable and profitable, I promised to play my part with the greatest skill. The bargain was struck, and he gave me full instructions as to my dialogue. He told me that the Englishman could only talk about my convent and any lovers I might have had; that on the latter point I was to cut him short, and to answer with a laugh that I did not know what he was talking about, and even to tell him that I was a nun in appearance only, and that in the course of toying I might let him see my hair. 'That,' said Capsucefalo, 'won't prevent him from thinking you a nun—yes! and the very nun he is amorous of, for he will have made up his mind that you cannot possibly be anyone else.' Seizing the point of the jest, I did not take the trouble to find out the name of the nun I was to represent, nor the convent whence I was to come; the only thing in my head was the five hundred sequins. So little have I troubled about aught else that, though I passed a delicious night

with you, and found you rather worthy of being paid for than paying, I have not ascertained who and what you are, and I don't know at this moment to whom I am speaking. You know what a night I had; I have told you it was delicious, and I was happy in the idea that I was going to have another. You have found everything out. I am sorry, but I am not afraid of anything, since I can put on any disguise I like, and can't prevent my lovers taking me for a saint if they like to do so. You have found weapons in my possession, but everyone is allowed to bear arms in self-defence. I plead not guilty on all counts."

"Do you know me?" said I.

"No, but I have often seen you passing under my window. I live at St. Roch, near the bridge."

The way in which the woman told her yarn convinced us that she was an adept in the science of prostitution, but we thought Capsucefalo, in spite of the count, worthy of the pillory. The girl was about ten years older than M—— M——, she was pretty, but light-complexioned, while my beautiful nun had fine dark brown hair and was at least three inches taller.

After twelve o'clock we sat down to supper, and did honour to the excellent meal which my dear Antoinette had prepared for us. We were cruel enough to leave the poor wretch without offering her so much as a glass of wine, but we thought it our duty.

While we were talking, the jolly Englishman made some witty comments on my eagerness to convince him that he had not enjoyed M—— M——'s favours.

"I can't believe," said he, "that you have shewn so much interest without being in love with the divine nun."

I answered by saying that if I were her lover I was much to be pitied in being condemned to go to the parlour, and no farther.

"I would gladly give a hundred guineas a month," said he, "to have the privilege of visiting her at the grating."

So saying he gave me my hundred sequins, complimenting me on my success, and I slipped them forthwith into my pocket.

At two o'clock in the morning we heard a soft knock on the street door.

"Here is our friend," I said, "be discreet, and you will see that he will make a full confession."

He came in and saw Murray and the lady, but did not discover that a third party was present till he heard the ante-room door being locked. He turned round and saw me, and as he knew me, merely said, without losing countenance,—

"Ah, you are here; you know, of course, that the secret must be kept?"

Murray laughed and calmly asked him to be seated, and he enquired, with the lady's pistols in

his hands, where he was going to take her before day-break.

"Home."

"I think you may be mistaken, as it is very possible that when you leave this place you will both of you be provided with a bed in prison."

"No, I am not afraid of that happening; the thing would make too much noise, and the laugh would not be on your side. Come," said he to his mate, "put on your cloak and let us be off."

The ambassador, who like an Englishman kept quite cool the whole time, poured him out a glass of Chambertin, and the blackguard drank his health. Murray seeing he had on a fine ring set with brilliants, praised it, and shewing some curiosity to see it more closely he drew it off the fellow's finger, examined it, found it without flaw, and asked how much it was worth. Capsucefalo, a little taken aback, said it cost him four hundred sequins.

"I will hold it as a pledge for that sum," said the ambassador, putting the ring into his pocket. The other looked chopfallen, and Murray laughing at his retiring manners told the girl to put on her cloak and to pack off with her worthy acolyte. She did so directly, and with a low bow they disappeared.

"Farewell, nun procurer!" said the ambassador, but the count made no answer.

As soon as they were gone I thanked Murray

warmly for the moderation he had shewn, as a scandal would have only injured three innocent people.

"Be sure," said he, that the guilty parties shall be punished without anyone's knowing the reason."

I then made Tonine come upstairs, and my English friend offered her a glass of wine, which she declined with much modesty and politeness. Murray looked at her with flaming glances, and left after giving me his heartiest thanks.

Poor little Tonine had been resigned and obedient for many hours, and she had good cause to think I had been unfaithful to her; however, I gave her the most unmistakable proofs of my fidelity. We stayed in bed for six hours, and rose happy in the morning.

After dinner I hurried off to my noble M—— M——, and told her the whole story. She listened eagerly, her various feelings flitting across her face. Fear, anger, wrath, approval of my method of clearing up my natural suspicions, joy at discovering me still her lover—all were depicted in succession in her glance, and in the play of her features, and in the red and white which followed one another on her cheeks and forehead. She was delighted to hear that the masker who was with me in the parlour was the English ambassador, but she became nobly disdainful when I told her that he would gladly give a hundred guineas a month for

the pleasure of visiting her in the parlour. She was angry with him for fancying that she had been in his power, and for finding a likeness between her and a portrait, when, so she said, there was no likeness at all; I had given her the portrait. She added, with a shrewd smile, that she was sure I had not let my little maid see the false nun, as she might have been mistaken.

"You know, do you, that I have a young servant?"

"Yes, and a pretty one, too. She is Laura's daughter, and if you love her I am very glad, and so is C—— C——. I hope you will let me have a sight of her. C——C—— has seen her before."

As I saw that she knew too much for me to be able to deceive her, I took my cue directly and told her in detail the history of my amours. She shewed her satisfaction too openly not to be sincere. Before I left her she said her honour obliged her to get Capsucefalo assassinated, for the wretch had wronged her beyond pardon. By way of quieting her I promised that if the ambassador did not rid us of him within the week I would charge myself with the execution of our common vengeance.

About this time died Bragadin the procurator, brother of my patron, leaving M. de Bragadin sufficiently well off. However, as the family threatened to become extinct, he desired a woman who had been his mistress, and of whom he had had a natural son, to become his wife. By this

marriage the son would have become legitimate, and the family renewed again. The College of Cardinals would have recognized the wife for a small fee, and all would have gone admirably.

The woman wrote to me, asking me to call on her; and I was going to, curious to know what a woman, whom I did not know from Adam, could want with me, when I received a summons from M. de Bragadin. He begged me to ask Paralis if he ought to follow De la Haye's advice in a matter he had promised not to confide to me, but of which the oracle must be informed. The oracle, naturally opposed to the Jesuit, told him to consult his own feelings and nothing else. After this I went to the lady.

She began by telling me the whole story. She introduced her son to me, and told me that if the marriage could be performed, a deed would be delivered in my favour by which, at the death of M. de Bragadin, I should become entitled to an estate worth five thousand crowns per annum.

As I guessed without much trouble that this was the same matter which De la Haye had proposed to M. de Bragadin, I answered without hesitation that since De la Haye was before me I could do nothing, and thereupon made her my bow.

I could not help wondering at this Jesuit's continually intriguing to marry my old friends without my knowledge. Two years ago, if I had not set my face against it, he would have married

M. Dandolo. I cared not a whit whether the family of Bragadin became extinct or not, but I did care for the life of my benefactor, and was quite sure that marriage would shorten it by many years; he was already sixty-three, and had recovered from a serious apoplectic stroke.

I went to dine with Lady Murray (Englishwomen who are daughters of lords keep the title), and after dinner the ambassador told me that he had told M. Cavalli the whole story of the false nun, and that the secretary had informed him, the evening before, that everything had been done to his liking. Count Capsucefalo had been sent to Cephalonia, his native country, with the order never to return to Venice, and the courtezan had disappeared.

The fine part, or rather the fearful part, about these sentences is that no one ever knows the reason why or wherefore, and that the lot may fall on the innocent as well as the guilty. M—— M—— was delighted with the event, and I was more pleased than she, for I should have been sorry to have been obliged to soil my hands with the blood of that rascally count.

There are seasons in the life of men which may be called *fasti* and *nefasti;* I have proved this often in my long career, and on the strength of the rubs and struggles I have had to encounter. I am able, as well as any man, to verify the truth of this axiom. I had just experienced a run of luck.

Fortune had befriended me at play, I had been happy in the society of men, and from love I had nothing to ask; but now the reverse of the medal began to appear. Love was still kind, but Fortune had quite left me, and you will soon see, reader, that men used me no better than the blind goddess. Nevertheless, since one's fate has phases as well as the moon, good follows evil as disasters succeed to happiness.

I still played on the martingale, but with such bad luck that I was soon left without a sequin. As I shared my property with M—— M—— I was obliged to tell her of my losses, and it was at her request that I sold all her diamonds, losing what I got for them; she had now only five hundred sequins by her. There was no more talk of her escaping from the convent, for we had nothing to live on! I still gamed, but for small stakes, waiting for the slow return of good luck.

One day the English ambassador, after giving me a supper at his casino with the celebrated Fanny Murray, asked me to let him sup at my casino at Muran, which I now only kept up for the sake of Tonine. I granted him the favour, but did not imitate his generosity. He found my little mistress smiling and polite, but always keeping within the bounds of decency, from which he would have very willingly excused her. The next morning he wrote to me as follows:

"I am madly in love with Tonine. If you

like to hand her over to me I will make the following provision for her: I will set her up in a suitable lodging which I will furnish throughout, and which I will give to her with all its contents, provided that I may visit her whenever I please, and that she gives me all the rights of a fortunate lover. I will give her a maid, a cook, and thirty sequins a month as provision for two people, without reckoning the wine, which I will procure myself. Besides this I will give her a life income of two hundred crowns per annum, over which she will have full control after living with me for a year. I give you a week to send your answer."

I replied immediately that I would let him know in three days whether his proposal were accepted, for Tonine had a mother of whom she was fond, and she would possibly not care to do anything without her consent. I also informed him that in all appearance the girl was with child.

The business was an important one for Tonine. I loved her, but I knew perfectly well that we could not pass the rest of our lives together, and I saw no prospect of being able to make her as good a provision as that offered by the ambassador. Consequently I had no doubts on the question, and the very same day I went to Muran and told her all.

"You wish to leave me, then," said she, in tears.

"I love you, dearest, and what I propose ought to convince you of my love."

"Not so; I cannot serve two masters."

"You will only serve your new lover, sweetheart. I beg of you to reflect that you will have a fine dowry, on the strength of which you may marry well; and that however much I love you I cannot possibly make so good a provision for you."

"Leave me to-day for tears and reflection, and come to supper with me to-morrow."

I did not fail to keep the appointment.

"I think your English friend is a very pretty man," she said, "and when he speaks in the Venetian dialect it makes me die with laughter. If my mother agrees, I might, perhaps, force myself to love him. Supposing we did not agree we could part at the end of a year, and I should be the richer by an income of two hundred crowns."

"I am charmed with the sense of your arguments; speak about it to your mother."

"I daren't, sweetheart; this kind of thing is too delicate to be discussed between a mother and her daughter; speak to her yourself."

"I will, indeed."

Laura, whom I had not seen since she had given me her daughter, asked for no time to think it over, but full of glee told me that now her daughter would be able to soothe her declining years, and that she would leave Muran of which she was tired. She shewed me a hundred and thirty sequins which Tonine had gained in my service, and which she had placed in her hands.

Barberine, Tonine's younger sister, came to kiss my hand. I thought her charming, and I gave her all the silver in my pocket. I then left, telling Laura that I should expect her at my house. She soon followed me, and gave her child a mother's blessing, telling her that she and her family could go and live in Venice for sixty sous a day. Tonine embraced her, and told her that she should have it.

This important affair having been managed to everybody's satisfaction, I went to see M—— M——, who came into the parlour with C—— C——, whom I found looking sad, though prettier than ever. She was melancholy, but none the less tender. She could not stay for more than a quarter of an hour for fear of being seen, as she was forbidden ever to go into the parlour. I told M—— M—— the story of Tonine, who was going to live with Murray in Venice; she was sorry to hear it, "for," said she, "now that you have no longer any attraction at Muran, I shall see you less than ever." I promised to come and see her often, but vain promises! The time was near which parted us for ever.

The same evening I went to tell the good news to my friend Murray. He was in a transport of joy, and begged me to come and sup with him at his casino the day after next, and to bring the girl with me, that the surrender might be made in form. I did not fail him, for once the matter was decided I longed to bring it to an end. In my presence he assigned to her the yearly income for her life of two

hundred Venetian ducats, and by a second deed he gave her all the contents of the house with which he was going to provide her, provided always that she lived with him for a year. He allowed her to receive me as a friend, also to receive her mother and sisters, and she was free to go and see them when she would. Tonine threw her arms about his neck, and assured him that she would endeavour to please him to the utmost of her ability. "I will see him," said she, pointing to me, "but as his friend he shall have nothing more from me." Throughout this truly affecting scene she kept back her tears, but I could not conceal mine. Murray was happy, but I was not long a witness of his good fortune, the reason of which I will explain a little later.

Three days afterwards Laura came to me, told me that she was living in Venice, and asked me to take her to her daughter's. I owed this woman too much to refuse her, and I took her there forthwith. Tonine gave thanks to God, and also to me, and her mother took up the song, for they were not quite sure whether they were more indebted to God or to me. Tonine was eloquent in her praise of Murray, and made no complaint at my not having come to see her, at which I was glad. As I was going Laura asked me to take her back in my gondola, and as we had to pass by the house in which she lived she begged me to come in for a moment, and I could not hurt her feelings by

refusing. I owe it to my honour to remark here that I was thus polite without thinking that I should see Barberine again.

This girl, as pretty as her sister, though in another style, began by awakening my curiosity—a weakness which usually renders the profligate man inconstant. If all women were to have the same features, the same disposition, and the same manners, men would not only never be inconstant, but would never be in love. Under that state of things one would chose a wife by instinct and keep to her till death, but our world would then be under a different system to the present. Novelty is the master of the soul. We know that what we do not see is very nearly the same as what we have seen, but we are curious, we like to be quite sure, and to attain our ends we give ourselves as much trouble as if we were certain of finding some prize beyond compare.

Barberine, who looked upon me as an old friend—for her mother had accustomed her to kiss my hand whenever I went there, who had undressed more than once in my presence without troubling about me, who knew I had made her sister's fortune and the family fortune as well, and thought herself prettier than Tonine because her skin was fairer, and because she had fine black eyes, desiring to take her sister's place, knew that to succeed she must take me by storm. Her

common sense told her that as I hardly ever came to the house, I should not be likely to become amorous of her unless she won me by storm; and to this end she shewed the utmost complaisance when she had the chance, so that I won her without any difficulty. All this reasoning came from her own head, for I am sure her mother gave her no instructions. Laura was a mother of a kind common the world over, but especially in Italy. She was willing to take advantage of the earnings of her daughters, but she would never have induced them to take the path of evil. There her virtue stopped short.

After I had inspected her two rooms and her little kitchen, and had admired the cleanness which shone all around, Barberine asked me if I would like to see their small garden.

"With pleasure," I replied, "for a garden is a rarity in Venice."

Her mother told her to give me some figs if there were any ripe ones. The garden consisted of about thirty square feet, and grew only salad herbs and a fine fig tree. It had not a good crop, and I told her that I could not see any figs.

"I can see some at the top," said Barberine, "and I will gather them if you will hold me the ladder."

"Yes, climb away; I will hold it quite firmly."

She stepped up lightly, and stretching out an arm to get at some figs to one side of her, she put

her body off its balance, holding on to the ladder with the other hand.

"My dear Barberine, what do you think I can see?"

"What you have often seen with my sister."

"That's true! but you are prettier than she is."

The girl made no reply, but, as if she could not reach the fruit, she put her foot on a high branch, and shewed me the most seductive picture. I was in an ecstacy, and Barberine, who saw it, did not hurry herself. At last I helped her to come down, and letting my hand wander indiscreetly, I asked her if the fruit I held had been plucked, and she kept me a long time telling me it was quite fresh. I took her within my arms, and already her captive, I pressed her amorously to my heart, printing on her lips a fiery kiss, which she gave me back with as much ardour.

"Will you give me what I have caught, dearest?"

"My mother is going to Muran to-morrow, and she will stay there all the day; if you come, there is nothing I will refuse you."

When speech like this proceeds from a mouth still innocent, the man to whom it is addressed ought to be happy, for desires are but pain and torment, and enjoyment is sweet because it delivers us from them. This shews that those who prefer a little resistance to an easy conquest are in the wrong; but a too easy conquest often points to a

depraved nature, and this men do not like, however depraved they themselves may be.

We returned to the house, and I gave Barberine a tender kiss before Laura's eyes, telling her that she had a very jewel in her daughter—a compliment which made her face light up with pleasure. I gave the dear girl ten sequins, and I went away congratulating myself, but cursing my luck at not being able to make as good provision for Barberine as Murray had made for her sister.

Tonine had told me that for manners' sake I should sup once with her. I went the same evening and found Righelini and Murray there. The supper was delicious, and I was delighted with the excellent understanding the two lovers had already come to. I complimented the ambassador on the loss of one of his tastes, and he told me he should be very sorry at such a loss, as it would warn him of his declining powers.

"But," said I, "you used to like to perform the mysterious sacrifice of Love without a veil."

"It was not I but Ancilla who liked it, and as I preferred pleasing her to pleasing myself, I gave in to her taste without any difficulty."

"I am delighted with your answer, as I confess it would cost me something to be the witness of your exploits with Tonine."

Having casually remarked that I had no longer a house in Muran, Righelini told me that if I liked

he could get me a delightful house at a low rent on the Tondamente Nuovo.

As this quarter facing north, and as agreeable in summer as disagreeable in winter, was opposite to Muran, where I should have to go twice a week, I told the doctor I should be glad to look at the house.

I took leave of the rich and fortunate ambassador at midnight, and before passing the day with my new prize I went to sleep so as to be fresh and capable of running a good course.

I went to Barberine at an early hour, and as soon as she saw me she said,—

"My mother will not be back till the evening, and my brother will take his dinner at the school. Here is a fowl, a ham, some cheese, and two bottles of Scopolo wine. We will take our mess whenever you like."

"You astonish me, sweetheart, for how did you manage to get such a good dinner?"

"We owe it to my mother, so to her be the praise."

"You have told her, then, what we are going to do?"

"No, not I, for I know nothing about it; but I told her you were coming to see me, and at the same time I gave her the ten sequins."

"And what did your mother say?"

"She said she wouldn't be sorry if you were to love me as you loved my sister."

"I love you better, though I love her well."

"You love her? Why have you left her, then?"

"I have not left her, for we supped together yesterday evening; but we no longer live together as lovers, that is all. I have yielded her up to a rich friend of mine, who has made her fortune."

"That is well, though I don't understand much about these affairs. I hope you will tell Tonine that I have taken her place, and I should be very pleased if you would let her know that you are quite sure you are my first lover."

"And supposing the news vexes her?"

"So much the better. Will you do it for me? it's the first favour I have asked of you."

"I promise to do so."

After this rapid dialogue we took breakfast, and then, perfectly agreed, we went to bed, rather as if we were about to sacrifice to Hymen than to love.

The game was new to Barberine, and her transports, her green notions—which she told me openly—her inexperience, or rather her awkwardness, enchanted me. I seemed for the first time to pluck the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and never had I tasted fruit so delicious. My little maid would have been ashamed to let me see how the first thorn hurt her, and to convince me that she only smelt the rose, she strove to make me think she experienced more pleasure than is possible in a first

trial, always more or less painful. She was not yet a big girl, the roses on her swelling breasts were as yet but buds scarcely to be seen, and she was a woman only in her heart.

After more than one assault delivered and sustained with spirit, we got up for dinner, and after we had refreshed ourselves we mounted once more the altar of love, where we remained till the evening. Laura found us dressed and well pleased with each other on her return. I made Barberine another present of twenty sequins, I swore to love her always, and went on my way. At the time I certainly meant to keep to my oath, but that which destiny had in store for me could not be reconciled with these promises which welled forth from my soul in a moment of excitement.

The next morning Righelini took me to see the lodging he had spoken to me about. I liked it and took it on the spot, paying the first quarter in advance. The house belonged to a widow with two daughters, the elder of whom had just been blooded. Righelini was her doctor, and had treated her for nine months without success. As he was going to pay her a visit I went in with him, and found myself in the presence of a fine waxen statue. Surprise drew from me these words:

"She is pretty, but the sculptor should give her some colour."

On which the statue smiled in a manner which would have been charming if her lips had but been red.

"Her pallor," said Righelini, "will not astonish you when I tell you she has just been blooded for the hundred and fourth time."

I gave a very natural gesture of surprise.

This fine girl had attained the age of eighteen years without experiencing the monthly relief afforded by nature, the result being that she left a deathly faintness three or four times a week, and the only relief was to open the vein.

"I want to send her to the country," said the doctor, "where pure and wholesome air, and, above all, more exercise, will do her more good than all the drugs in the world."

After I had been told that my bed should be made ready by the evening, I went away with Righelini, who told me that the only cure for the girl would be a good strong lover.

"But my dear doctor," said I, "can't you make your own prescription?"

"That would be too risky a game, for I might find myself compelled to marry her, and I hate marriage like the devil."

Though I was no better inclined towards marriage than the doctor, I was too near the fire not to get burnt, and the reader will see in the next chapter how I performed the miraculous cure of bringing the colours of health into the cheeks of this pallid beauty.

CHAPTER VIII

THE FAIR INVALID—I CURE HER—A PLOT FORMED TO RUIN ME—WHAT HAPPENED AT THE HOUSE OF THE YOUNG COUNTESS BONAFÈDE—THE ERBERIA—DOMICILIARY VISIT—MY CONVERSATION WITH M. DE BRAGADIN—I AM ARRESTED BY ORDER OF THE STATE INQUISITORS.

After leaving Dr. Righelini I went to sup with M. de Bragadin, and gave the generous and worthy old man a happy evening. This was always the case; I made him and his two good friends happy whenever I took meals with them.

Leaving them at an early hour, I went to my lodging and was greatly surprised to find my bedroom balcony occupied. A young lady of an exquisite figure rose as soon as she saw me, and gracefully asked me pardon for the liberty she had taken.

"I am," she said, "the statue you saw this morning. We do not light the candles in the evening for fear of attracting the gnats, but when you want to go to bed we will shut the door and go

away. I beg to introduce you to my younger sister, my mother has gone to bed."

I answered her to the effect that the balcony was always at her service, and that since it was still early I begged their permission to put on my dressing-gown and to keep them company. Her conversation was charming; she made me spend two most delightful hours, and did not leave me till twelve o'clock. Her younger sister lighted me a candle, and as they went they wished me a good night.

I lay down full of this pretty girl, and I could not believe that she was really ill. She spoke to the point, she was cheerful, clever, and full of spirits. I could not understand how it came to pass that she had not been already cured in a town like Venice, if her cure was really only to be effected in the manner described by Dr. Righelini; for in spite of her pallor she seemed to me quite fair enough to charm a lover, and I believed her to be spirited enough to determine to take the most agreeable medicine a doctor can prescribe.

In the morning I rang the bell as I was getting up, and the younger sister came into my room, and said that as they kept no servant she had come to do what I wanted. I did not care to have a servant when I was not at M. de Bragadin's, as I found myself more at liberty to do what I liked. After she had done me some small services, I asked her how her sister was.

"Very well," said she, "for her pale complexion is not an illness, and she only suffers when her breath fails her. She has a very good appetite, and sleeps as well as I do."

"Whom do I hear playing the violin?"

"It's the dancing master giving my sister a lesson."

I hurried over my dressing that I might see her; and I found her charming, though her old dancing master allowed her to turn in her toes. All that this young and beautiful girl wanted was the Promethean spark, the colour of life; her whiteness was too like snow, and was distressing to look at.

The dancing master begged me to dance a minuet with his pupil, and I assented, asking him to play *larghissimo*. "The signorina would find it too tiring," said he; but she hastened to answer that she did not feel weak, and would like to dance thus. She danced very well, but when we had done she was obliged to throw herself in a chair. "In future, my dear master," said she, " I will only dance like that, for I think the rapid motion will do me good."

When the master was gone, I told her that her lessons were too short, and that her master was letting her get into bad habits. I then set her feet, her shoulders, and her arms in the proper manner. I taught her how to give her hand gracefully, to bend her knees in time; in fine, I gave her a regular lesson for an hour, and seeing that she was

getting rather tired I begged her to sit down, and I went out to pay a visit to M—— M——.

I found her very sad, for C—— C——'s father was dead, and they had taken her out of the convent to marry her to a lawyer. Before leaving C—— C—— had left a letter for me, in which she said that if I would promise to marry her at some time suitable to myself, she would wait for me, and refuse all other offers. I answered her straightforwardly that I had no property and no prospects, that I left her free, advising her not to refuse any offer which might be to her advantage.

In spite of this dismissal C—— C—— did not marry N—— till after my flight from The Leads, when nobody expected to see me again in Venice. I did not see her for nineteen years, and then I was grieved to find her a widow, and poorly off. If I went to Venice now I should not marry her, for at my age marriage is an absurdity, but I would share with her my little all, and live with her as with a dear sister.

When I hear women talking about the bad faith and inconstancy of men, and maintaining that when men make promises of eternal constancy they are always deceivers, I confess that they are right, and join in their complaints. Still it cannot be helped, for the promises of lovers are dictated by the heart, and consequently the lamentations of women only make me want to laugh. Alas! we love without heeding reason, and cease to love in the same manner.

About this time I received a letter from the Abbé de Bernis, who wrote also to M—— M——. He told me that I ought to do my utmost to make our nun take a reasonable view of things, dwelling on the risks I should run in carrying her off and bringing her to Paris, where all his influence would be of no avail to obtain for us that safety so indispensable to happiness. I saw M—— M——; we shewed each other our letters, she had some bitter tears, and her grief pierced me to the heart. I still had a great love for her in spite of my daily infidelities, and when I thought of those moments in which I had seen her given over to voluptuousness I could not help pitying her fate as I thought of the days of despair in store for her. But soon after this an event happened which gave rise to some wholesome reflections. One day, when I had come to see her, she said,—

"They have just been burying a nun who died of consumption the day before yesterday in the odour of sanctity. She was called "Maria Concetta." She knew you, and told C—— C—— your name when you used to come to mass on feast days. C—— C—— begged her to be discreet, but the nun told her that you were a dangerous man, whose presence should be shunned by a young girl. C—— C—— told me all this after the mask of Pierrot."

"What was this saint's name when she was in the world?"

"Martha S——."

"I know her."

I then told M—— M—— the whole history of my loves with Nanette and Marton, ending with the letter she wrote me, in which she said that she owed me, indirectly, that eternal salvation to which she hoped to attain.

In eight or ten days my conversation with my hostess' daughter—conversation which took place on the balcony, and which generally lasted till midnight—and the lesson I gave her every morning, produced the inevitable and natural results; firstly, that she no longer complained of her breath failing, and, secondly, that I fell in love with her. Nature's cure had not yet relieved her, but she no longer needed to be let blood. Righelini came to visit her as usual, and seeing that she was better he prophesied that nature's remedy, without which only art could keep her alive, would make all right before the autumn. Her mother looked upon me as an angel sent by God to cure her daughter, who for her part shewed me that gratitude which with women is the first step towards love. I had made her dismiss her old dancing master, and I had taught her to dance with extreme grace.

At the end of these ten or twelve days, just as I was going to give her her lesson, her breath failed instantaneously, and she fell back into my arms like a dead woman. I was alarmed, but her

mother, who had become accustomed to see her thus, sent for the surgeon, and her sister unlaced her. I was enchanted with her exquisite bosom, which needed no colouring to make it more beautiful. I covered it up, saying that the surgeon would make a false stroke if he were to see her thus uncovered; but feeling that I laid my hand upon her with delight, she gently repulsed me, looking at me with a languishing gaze which made the deepest impression on me.

The surgeon came and bled her in the arm, and almost instantaneously she recovered full consciousness. At most only four ounces of blood were taken from her, and her mother telling me that this was the utmost extent to which she was blooded, I saw it was no such matter for wonder as Righelini represented it, for being blooded twice a week she lost three pounds of blood a month, which she would have done naturally if the vessels had not been obstructed.

The surgeon had hardly gone out of the door when to my astonishment she told me that if I would wait for her a moment she would come back and begin her dancing. This she did, and danced as if there had been nothing the matter.

Her bosom, on which two of my senses were qualified to give evidence, was the last stroke, and made me madly in love with her. I returned to the house in the evening, and found her in her room with the sister. She told me that she was

expecting her god-father, who was an intimate friend of her father's, and had come every evening to spend an hour with her for the last eighteen years.

"How old is he?"

"He is over fifty."

"Is he a married man?"

"Yes, his name is Count S——. He is as fond of me as a father would be, and his affection has continued the same since my childhood. Even his wife comes to see me sometimes, and to ask me to dinner. Next autumn I am going into the country with her, and I hope the fresh air will do me good. My god-father knows you are staying with us and is satisfied. He does not know you, but if you like you can make his acquaintance."

I was glad to hear all this, as I gained a good deal of useful information without having to ask any awkward questions. The friendship of this Greek looked very like love. He was the husband of Countess S——, who had taken me to the convent at Muran two years before.

I found the count a very polite man. He thanked me in a paternal manner for my kindness to his daughter, and begged me to do him the honour of dining with him on the following day, telling me that he would introduce me to his wife. I accepted his invitation with pleasure, for I was fond of dramatic situations, and my meeting with the countess promised to be an exciting one. This

invitation bespoke the courteous gentleman, and I charmed my pretty pupil by singing his praises after he had gone.

"My god-father," said she, "is in possession of all the necessary documents for withdrawing from the house of Persico our family fortune, which amounts to forty thousand crowns. A quarter of this sum belongs to me, and my mother has promised my sister and myself to share her dowry between us."

I concluded from this that she would bring her husband fifteen thousand Venetian ducats.

I guessed that she was appealing to me with her fortune, and wished to make me in love with her by shewing herself chary of her favours; for whenever I allowed myself any small liberties, she checked me with words of remonstrance to which I could find no answer. I determined to make her pursue another course.

Next day I took her with me to her god-father's without telling her that I knew the countess. I fancied the lady would pretend not to know me, but I was wrong, as she welcomed me in the handsomest manner as if I were an old friend. This, no doubt, was a surprise for the count, but he was too much a man of the world to shew any astonishment. He asked her when she had made my acquaintance, and she, like a woman of experience, answered without the slightest hesitation that we had seen each other two years ago

at Mira. The matter was settled, and we spent a very pleasant day.

Towards evening I took the young lady in my gondola back to the house, but wishing to shorten the journey I allowed myself to indulge in a few caresses. I was hurt at being responded to by reproaches, and for that reason, as soon as she had set foot on her own doorstep, instead of getting out I went to Tonine's house, and spent nearly the whole night there with the ambassador, who came a little after me. Next day, as I did not get up till quite late, there was no dancing lesson, and when I excused myself she told me not to trouble any more about it. In the evening I sat on the balcony far into the night, but she did not come. Vexed at this air of indifference I rose early in the morning and went out, not returning till nightfall. She was on the balcony, but as she kept me at a respectful distance I only talked to her on commonplace subjects. In the morning I was roused by a tremendous noise. I got up, and hurriedly putting on my dressing-gown ran into her room to see what was the matter, only to find her dying. I had no need to feign an interest in her, for I felt the most tender concern. As it was at the beginning of July it was extremely hot, and my fair invalid was only covered by a thin sheet. She could only speak to me with her eyes, but though the lids were lowered she looked upon me so lovingly! I asked her if she suffered from palpitations, and

laying my hand upon her heart I pressed a fiery kiss upon her breast. This was the electric spark, for she gave a sigh which did her good. She had not strength to repulse the hand which I pressed amorously upon her heart, and becoming bolder I fastened my burning lips upon her languid mouth. I warmed her with my breath, and my audacious hand penetrated to the very sanctuary of bliss. She made an effort to push me back, and told me with her eyes, since she could not speak, how insulted she felt. I drew back my hand, and at that moment the surgeon came. Hardly was the vein opened when she drew a long breath, and by the time the operation was over she wished to get up. I entreated her to stay in bed, and her mother added her voice to mine; at last I persuaded her, telling her that I would not leave her for a second, and that I would have my dinner by her bedside. She then put on a corset and asked her sister to draw a sarcenet coverlet over her, as her limbs could be seen as plainly as through a crape veil.

Having given orders for my dinner, I sat down by her bedside, burning with love, and taking her hand and covering it with kisses I told her that I was sure she would get better if she would let herself love.

"Alas!" she said, "whom shall I love, not knowing whether I shall be loved in return?"

I did not leave this question unanswered, and continuing the amorous discourse with animation I

won a sigh and a lovelorn glance. I put my hand on her knee, begging her to let me leave it there, and promising to go no farther, but little by little I attained the centre, and strove to give her some pleasant sensations.

"Let me alone," said she, in a sentimental voice, drawing away, "'tis perchance the cause of my illness."

"No, sweetheart," I replied, "that cannot be." And my mouth stopped all her objections upon her lips.

I was enchanted, for I was now in a fair way, and I saw the moment of bliss in the distance, feeling certain that I could effect a cure if the doctor was not mistaken. I spared her all indiscreet questions out of regard for her modesty; but I declared myself her lover, promising to ask nothing of her but what was necessary to feed the fire of my love. They sent me up a very good dinner, and she did justice to it; afterwards saying that she was quite well she got up, and I went away to dress myself for going out. I came back early in the evening, and found her on my balcony. There, as I sat close to her looking into her face, speaking by turns the language of the eyes and that of sighs, fixing my amorous gaze upon those charms which the moonlight rendered sweeter, I made her share in the fire which consumed me; and as I pressed her amorously to my bosom she completed my bliss with such warmth that I could

easily see that she thought she was receiving a favour and not granting one. I sacrificed the victim without staining the altar with blood.

Her sister came to tell her that it grew late.

"Do you go to bed," she answered; "the fresh air is doing me good, and I want to enjoy it a little longer."

As soon as we were alone we went to bed together as if we had been doing it for a whole year, and we passed a glorious night, I full of love and the desire of curing her, and she of tender and ardent voluptuousness. At day-break she embraced me, her eyes dewy with bliss, and went to lie down in her own bed. I, like her, stood in need of a rest, and on that day there was no talk of a dancing lesson. In spite of the fierce pleasure of enjoyment and the transports of this delightful girl, I did not for a moment lay prudence aside. We continued to pass such nights as these for three weeks, and I had the pleasure of seeing her thoroughly cured. I should doubtless have married her, if an event had not happened to me towards the end of the month, of which I shall speak lower down.

You will remember, dear reader, about a romance by the Abbé Chiari, a satirical romance which Mr. Murray had given me, and in which I fared badly enough at the author's hands. I had small reason to be pleased with him, and I let him know my opinion in such wise that the abbé, who dreaded a caning, kept upon his guard. About the

same time I received an anonymous letter, the writer of which told me that I should be better occupied in taking care of myself than in thoughts of chastising the abbé, for I was threatened by an imminent danger. Anonymous letter-writers should be held in contempt, but one ought to know how, on occasion, to make the best of advice given in that way. I did nothing, and made a great mistake.

About the same time a man named Manuzzi, a stone setter for his first trade, and also a spy, a vile agent of the State Inquisitors—a man of whom I knew nothing—found a way to make my acquaintance by offering to let me have diamonds on credit, and by this means he got the entry of my house. As he was looking at some books scattered here and there about the room, he stopped short at the manuscripts which were on magic. Enjoying, foolishly enough, his look of astonishment, I shewed him the books which teach one how to summon the elementary spirits. My readers will, I hope, do me the favour to believe that I put no faith in these conjuring books, but I had them by me and used to amuse myself with them as one does amuse one's self with the multitudinous follies which proceed from the heads of visionaries. A few days after, the traitor came to see me and told me that a collector, whose name he might not tell me, was ready to give me a thousand sequins for my five books, but that he would like to examine them first to see if they were

genuine. As he promised to let me have them back in twenty-four hours, and not thinking much about the matter, I let him have them. He did not fail to bring them back the next day, telling me that the collector thought them forgeries. I found out, some years after, that he had taken them to the State Inquisitors, who thus discovered that I was a notable magician.

Everything that happened throughout this fatal month tended to my ruin, for Madame Memmo, mother of André, Bernard, and Laurent Memmo, had taken it into her head that I had inclined her sons to atheistic opinions, and took counsel with the old knight Antony Mocenigo, M. de Bragadin's uncle, who was angry with me, because, as he said, I had conspired to seduce his nephew. The matter was a serious one, and an *auto-da-fé* was very possible, as it came under the jurisdiction of the Holy Office—a kind of wild beast, with which it is not good to quarrel. Nevertheless, as there would be some difficulty in shutting me up in the ecclesiastical prisons of the Holy Office, it was determined to carry my case before the State Inquisitors, who took upon themselves the provisional duty of putting a watch upon my manner of living.

M. Antony Condulmer, who as a friend of Abbé Chiari's was an enemy of mine, was then an Inquisitor of State, and he took the opportunity of looking upon me in the light of a disturber of the

peace of the commonwealth. A secretary of an embassy, whom I knew some years after, told me that a paid informer, with two other witnesses, also, doubtless, in the pay of this grand tribunal, had declared that I was guilty of only believing in the devil, as if this absurd belief, if it were possible, did not necessarily connote a belief in God! These three honest fellows testified with an oath that when I lost money at play, on which occasion all the faithful are wont to blaspheme, I was never heard to curse the devil. I was further accused of eating meat all the year round, of only going to hear fine masses, and I was vehemently suspected of being a Freemason. It was added that I frequented the society of foreign ministers, and that living as I did with three noblemen, it was certain that I revealed, for the large sums which I was seen to lose, as many state secrets as I could worm out of them.

All these accusations, none of which had any foundation in fact, served the Tribunal as a pretext to treat me as an enemy of the commonwealth and as a prime conspirator. For several weeks I was counselled by persons whom I might have trusted to go abroad whilst the Tribunal was engaged on my case. This should have been enough, for the only people who can live in peace at Venice are those whose existence the Tribunal is ignorant of, but I obstinately despised all these hints. If I had listened to the indirect advice which was given me, I should have become anxious, and I was the sworn

foe of all anxiety. I kept saying to myself, "I feel remorse for nothing and I am therefore guilty of nothing, and the innocent have nothing to fear." I was a fool, for I argued as if I had been a free man in a free country. I must also confess that what to a great extent kept me from thinking of possible misfortune was the actual misfortune which oppressed me from morning to night. I lost every day, I owed money everywhere, I had pawned all my jewels, and even my portrait cases, taking the precaution, however, of removing the portraits, which with my important papers and my amorous letters I had placed in the hands of Madame Manzoni. I found myself avoided in society. An old senator told me, one day, that it was known that the young Countess Bonafède had become mad in consequence of the love philtres I had given her. She was still at the asylum, and in her moments of delirium she did nothing but utter my name with curses. I must let my readers into the secret of this small history.

This young Countess Bonafède, to whom I had given some sequins a few days after my return to Venice, thought herself capable of making me continue my visits, from which she had profited largely. Worried by her letters I went to see her several times, and always left her a few sequins, but with the exception of my first visit I was never polite enough to give her any proofs of my affection. My coldness had baulked all her endeavours for a

year, when she played a criminal part, of which, though I was never able absolutely to convict her, I had every reason to believe her guilty.

She wrote me a letter, in which she importuned me to come and see her at a certain hour on important business.

My curiosity, as well as a desire to be of service to her, took me there at the appointed time; but as soon as she saw me she flung her arms round my neck, and told me that the important business was love. This made me laugh heartily, and I was pleased to find her looking neater than usual, which, doubtless, made me find her looking prettier. She reminded me of St. André, and succeeded so well in her efforts that I was on the point of satisfying her desires. I took off my cloak, and asked her if her father were in. She told me he had gone out. Being obliged to go out for a minute, in coming back I mistook the door, and I found myself in the next room, where I was much astonished to see the count and two villainous-looking fellows with him.

"My dear count," I said, "your daughter has just told me that you were out."

"I myself told her to do so, as I have some business with these gentlemen, which, however, can wait for another day."

I would have gone, but he stopped me, and having dismissed the two men he told me that he was delighted to see me, and forthwith began

the tale of his troubles, which were of more than one kind. The State Inquisitors had stopped his slender pension, and he was on the eve of seeing himself driven out with his family into the streets to beg his bread. He said that he had not been able to pay his landlord anything for three years, but if he could pay only a quarter's rent, he would obtain a respite, or if he persisted in turning him out, he could make a night-flitting of it, and take up his abode somewhere else. As he only wanted twenty ducats, I took out six sequins and gave them to him. He embraced me, and shed tears of joy; then, taking his poor cloak, he called his daughter, told her to keep me company, and went out.

Alone with the countess, I examined the door of communication between the two rooms and found it slightly open.

"Your father," I said, "would have surprised me, and it is easy to guess what he would have done with the two *sbirri* who were with him. The plot is clear, and I have only escaped from it by the happiest of chances."

She denied, wept, called God to witness, threw herself on her knees; but I turned my head away, and taking my cloak went away without a word. She kept on writing to me, but her letters remained unanswered, and I saw her no more.

It was summer-time, and between the heat, her passions, hunger, and wretchedness, her head was

turned, and she became so mad that she went out of the house stark naked, and ran up and down St. Peter's Place, asking those who stopped her to take her to my house. This sad story went all over the town and caused me a great deal of annoyance. The poor wretch was sent to an asylum, and did not recover her reason for five years. When she came out she found herself reduced to beg her bread in the streets, like all her brothers, except one, whom I found a cadet in the guards of the King of Spain twelve years afterwards.

At the time of which I am speaking all this had happened a year ago, but the story was dug up against me, and dressed out in the attire of fiction, and thus formed part of those clouds which were to discharge their thunder upon me to my destruction.

In the July of 1755 the hateful court gave Messer-Grande instructions to secure me, alive or dead. In this furious style all orders for arrests proceeding from the Three were issued, for the least of their commands carried with it the penalty of death.

Three or four days before the Feast of St. James, my patron saint, M—— M—— made me a present of several ells of silver lace to trim a sarcenet dress which I was going to wear on the eve of the feast. I went to see her, dressed in my fine suit, and I told her that I should come again on the day following to ask her to lend me

some money, as I did not know where to turn to find some. She was still in possession of the five hundred sequins which she had put aside when I had sold her diamonds.

As I was sure of getting the money in the morning I passed the night at play, and I lost the five hundred sequins in advance. At day-break, being in need of a little quiet, I went to the Erberia, a space of ground on the quay of the Grand Canal. Here is held the herb, fruit, and flower market.

People in good society who come to walk in the Erberia at a rather early hour usually say that they come to see the hundreds of boats laden with vegetables, fruit and flowers, which hail from the numerous islands near the town; but everyone knows that they are men and women who have been spending the night in the excesses of Venus or Bacchus, or who have lost all hope at the gaming-table, and come here to breath a purer air and to calm their minds. The fashion of walking in this place shews how the character of a nation changes. The Venetians of old time who made as great a mystery of love as of state affairs, have been replaced by the modern Venetians, whose most prominent characteristic is to make a mystery of nothing. Those who come to the Erberia with women wish to excite the envy of their friends by thus publishing their good fortune. Those who come alone are on the watch for discoveries, or on the look-out for materials to

make wives or husbands jealous, the women only come to be seen, glad to let everybody know that they are without any restraint upon their actions. There was certainly no question of smartness there, considering the disordered style of dress worn. The women seemed to have agreed to shew all the signs of disorder imaginable, to give those who saw them something to talk about. As for the men, on whose arms they leaned, their careless and lounging airs were intended to give the idea of a surfeit of pleasure, and to make one think that the disordered appearance of their companions was a sure triumph they had enjoyed. In short it was the correct thing to look tired out, and as if one stood in need of sleep.

This veracious description, reader, will not give you a very high opinion of the morals of my dear fellow-citizens; but what object should I have at my age for deceiving? Venice is not at the world's end, but is well enough known to those whose curiosity brings them into Italy; and everyone can see for himself if my pictures are overdrawn.

After walking up and down for half an hour, I came away, and thinking the whole house still a-bed I drew my key out to open the door, but what was my astonishment to find it useless, as the door was open, and what is more, the lock burst off. I ran upstairs, and found them all up, and my landlady uttering bitter lamentations.

"Messer-Grande," she told me, "has entered my house forcibly, accompanied by a band of *sbirri*. He turned everything upside down, on the pretext that he was in search of a portmanteau full of salt—a highly contraband article. He said he knew that a portmanteau had been landed there the evening before, which was quite true, but it belonged to Count S——, and only contained linen and clothes. Messer-Grande, after inspecting it, went out without saying a word."

He had also paid my room a visit. She told me that she must have some reparation made her, and thinking she was in the right I promised to speak to M. de Bragadin on the matter the same day. Needing rest above all things, I lay down, but my nervous excitement, which I attributed to my heavy losses at play, made me rise after three or four hours, and I went to see M. de Bragadin, to whom I told the whole story begging him to press for some signal amends. I made a lively representation to him of all the grounds on which my landlady required proportionate amends to be made, since the laws guaranteed the peace of all law-abiding people.

I saw that the three friends were greatly saddened by what I said, and the wise old man, quietly but sadly, told me that I should have my answer after dinner.

De la Haye dined with us, but all through the meal, which was a melancholy one, he spoke not a

word. His silence should have told me all, if I had not been under the influence of some malevolent genii who would not allow me to exercise my common sense: as to the sorrow of my three friends, I put that down to their friendship for me.

My connection with these worthy men had always been the talk of the town, and as all were agreed that it could not be explained on natural grounds, it was deemed to be the effect of some sorcery exercised by me. These three men were thoroughly religious and virtuous citizens; I was nothing if not irreligious, and Venice did not contain a greater libertine. Virtue, it was said, may have compassion on vice, but cannot become its friend.

After dinner M. de Bragadin took me into his closet with his two friends, from whom he had no secrets. He told me with wonderful calmness that instead of meditating vengeance on Messer-Grande I should be thinking of putting myself in a place of safety.

"The portmanteau," said he, "was a mere pretext; it was you they wanted and thought to find. Since your good genius has made them miss you, look out for yourself; perhaps by to-morrow it may be too late. I have been a State Inquisitor for eight months, and I know the way in which the arrests ordered by the court are carried out. They would not break open a door to look for a box of salt. Indeed, it is possible that they knew you

were out, and sought to warn you to escape in this manner. Take my advice, my dear son, and set out directly for Fusina, and thence as quickly as you can make your way to Florence, where you can remain till I write to you that you may return with safety. If you have no money I will give you a hundred sequins for present expenses. Believe me that prudence bids you go."

Blinded by my folly, I answered him that being guilty of nothing I had nothing to fear, and that consequently, although I knew his advice was good, I could not follow it.

"The high court," said he, "may deem you guilty of crimes real or imaginary; but in any case it will give you no account of the accusations against you. Ask your oracle if you shall follow my advice or not." I refused because I knew the folly of such a proceeding, but by way of excuse I said that I only consulted it when I was in doubt. Finally, I reasoned that if I fled I should be shewing fear, and thus confessing my guilt, for an innocent man, feeling no remorse, cannot reasonably be afraid of anything.

"If secrecy," said I, "is of the essence of the Court, you cannot possibly judge, after my escape, whether I have done so rightly or wrongly. The same reasons, which, according to your excellence, bid me go, would forbid my return. Must I then say good-bye for ever to my country, and all that is dear to me?" As a last resource he tried to persuade me to pass the following day and night, at

least, at the palace. I am still ashamed of having refused the worthy old man to whom I owed so much this favour; for the palace of a noble is sacred to the police who dare not cross its threshold without a special order from the tribunal, which is practically never given; by yielding to his request I should have avoided a grievous misfortune, and spared the worthy old man some acute grief.

I was moved to see M. de Bragadin weeping, and perhaps I might have granted to his tears that which I had obstinately refused to his arguments and entreaties. "For Heaven's sake!" said I, "spare me the harrowing sight of your tears." In an instant he summoned all his strength to his assistance, made some indifferent remarks, and then, with a smile full of good nature, he embraced me, saying, "Perhaps I may be fated never to see you again, but *Fata viam invenient.*"

I embraced him affectionately, and went away, but his prediction was verified, for I never saw him again; he died eleven years afterwards. I found myself in the street without feeling the slightest fear, but I was in a good deal of trouble about my debts. I had not the heart to go to Muran to take away from M—— M—— her last five hundred sequins, which sum I owed to the man who won it from me in the night; I preferred asking him to wait eight days, and I did so. After performing this unpleasant piece of business I returned home, and, having consoled my landlady to the utmost of

my power, I kissed the daughter, and lay down to sleep. The date was July 25th, 1755.

Next morning at day-break who should enter my room but the awful Messer-Grande. To awake, to see him, and to hear him asking if I were Jacques Casanova, was the work of a moment. At my "yes, I am Casanova," he told me to rise, to put on my clothes, to give him all the papers and manuscripts in my possession, and to follow him.

"On whose authority do you order me to do this?"

"By the authority of the Tribunal."

CHAPTER IX

UNDER THE LEADS—THE EARTHQUAKE

What a strange and unexplained power certain words exercise upon the soul! I, who the evening before so bravely fortified myself with my innocence and courage, by the word tribunal was turned to a stone, with merely the faculty of passive obedience left to me.

My desk was open, and all my papers were on a table where I was accustomed to write.

"Take them," said I, to the agent of the dreadful tribunal, pointing to the papers which covered the table. He filled a bag with them, and gave it to one of the *sbirri,* and then told me that I must also give up the bound manuscripts which I had in my possession. I shewed him where they were, and this incident opened my eyes. I saw now, clearly enough, that I had been betrayed by the wretch Manuzzi. The books were, "The Key of Solomon the King," "The Zecorben," a "Picatrix," a book of "Instructions on the Planetary Hours," and the necessary incantations for conversing with

demons of all sorts. Those who were aware that I possessed these books took me for an expert magician, and I was not sorry to have such a reputation.

Messer-Grande took also the books on the table by my bed, such as Petrarch, Ariosto, Horace. "The Military Philosopher" (a manuscript which Mathilde had given me), "The Porter of Chartreux," and "The Aretin," which Manuzzi had also denounced, for Messer-Grande asked me for it by name. This spy, Manuzzi, had all the appearance of an honest man—a very necessary qualification for his profession. His son made his fortune in Poland by marrying a lady named Opeska, whom, as they say, he killed, though I have never had any positive proof on the matter, and am willing to stretch Christian charity to the extent of believing he was innocent, although he was quite capable of such a crime.

While Messer-Grande was thus rummaging among my manuscripts, books and letters, I was dressing myself in an absent-minded manner, neither hurrying myself nor the reverse. I made my toilette, shaved myself, and combed my hair; putting on mechanically a laced shirt and my holiday suit without saying a word, and without Messer-Grande—who did not let me escape his sight for an instant—complaining that I was dressing myself as if I were going to a wedding.

As I went out I was surprised to see a band of

forty men-at-arms in the ante-room. They had done me the honour of thinking all these men necessary for my arrest, though, according to the axiom *Ne Hercules quidem contra duos,* two would have been enough. It is curious that in London, where everyone is brave, only one man is needed to arrest another, whereas in my dear native land, where cowardice prevails, thirty are required. The reason is, perhaps, that the coward on the offensive is more afraid than the coward on the defensive, and thus a man usually cowardly is transformed for the moment into a man of courage. It is certain that at Venice one often sees a man defending himself against twenty *sbirri,* and finally escaping after beating them soundly. I remember once helping a friend of mine at Paris to escape from the hands of forty bum-bailiffs, and we put the whole vile rout of them to flight.

Messer-Grande made me get into a gondola, and sat down near me with an escort of four men. When we came to our destination he offered me coffee, which I refused; and he then shut me up in a room. I passd these four hours in sleep, waking up every quarter of an hour to pass water—an extraordinary occurrence, as I was not at all subject to stranguary; the heat was great, and I had not supped the evening before. I have noticed at other times that surprise at a deed of oppression acts on me as a powerful narcotic, but I found out at the time I speak of that great

surprise is also a diuretic. I make this discovery over to the doctors, it is possible that some learned man may make use of it to solace the ills of humanity. I remember laughing very heartily at Prague six years ago, on learning that some thin-skinned ladies, on reading my flight from The Leads, which was published at that date, took great offence at the above account, which they thought I should have done well to leave out. I should have left it out, perhaps, in speaking to a lady, but the public is not a pretty woman whom I am intent on cajoling, my only aim is to be instructive. Indeed, I see no impropriety in the circumstance I have narrated, which is as common to men and women as eating and drinking; and if there is anything in it to shock too sensitive nerves, it is that we resemble in this respect the cows and pigs.

It is probable that just as my overwhelmed soul gave signs of its failing strength by the loss of the thinking faculty, so my body distilled a great part of those fluids which by their continual circulation set the thinking faculty in motion. Thus a sudden shock might cause instantaneous death, and send one to Paradise by a cut much too short.

In course of time the captain of the men-at-arms came to tell me that he was under orders to take me *under the Leads*. Without a word I followed him. We went by gondola, and after a

thousand turnings among the small canals we got into the Grand Canal, and landed at the prison quay. After climbing several flights of stairs we crossed a closed bridge which forms the communication between the prisons and the Doge's palace, crossing the canal called Rio di Palazzo. On the other side of this bridge there is a gallery which we traversed. We then crossed one room, and entered another, where sat an individual in the dress of a noble. who, after looking fixedly at me, said, *"E quello, mettetelo in deposito."*

This man was the secretary of the Inquisitors, the prudent Dominic Cavalli, who was apparently ashamed to speak Venetian in my presence as he pronounced my doom in the Tuscan language.

Messer-Grande then made me over to the warden of The Leads, who stood by with an enormous bunch of keys, and accompanied by two guards, made me climb two short flights of stairs, at the top of which followed a passage and then another gallery, at the end of which he opened a door, and I found myself in a dirty garret, thirty-six feet long by twelve broad, badly lighted by a window high up in the roof. I thought this garret was my prison, but I was mistaken; for, taking an enormous key, the gaoler opened a thick door lined with iron, three and a half feet high, with a round hole in the middle, eight inches in diameter, just as I was looking intently at an iron machine. This machine was like a horse shoe, an

inch thick and about five inches across from one end to the other. I was thinking what could be the use to which this horrible instrument was put, when the gaoler said, with a smile,—

"I see, sir, that you wish to know what that is for, and as it happens I can satisfy your curiosity. When their excellencies give orders that anyone is to be strangled, he is made to sit down on a stool, the back turned to this collar, and his head is so placed that the collar goes round one half of the neck. A silk band, which goes round the other half, passes through this hole, and the two ends are connected with the axle of a wheel which is turned by someone until the prisoner gives up the ghost, for the confessor, God be thanked! never leaves him till he is dead."

"All this sounds very ingenious, and I should think that it is you who have the honour of turning the wheel."

He made no answer, and signing to me to enter, which I did by bending double, he shut me up, and afterwards asked me through the grated hole what I would like to eat.

"I haven't thought anything about it yet," I answered. And he went away, locking all the doors carefully behind him.

Stunned with grief, I leant my elbows on the top of the grating. It was crossed by six iron bars an inch thick, which formed sixteen square holes. This opening would have lighted my cell, if a square

beam supporting the roof which joined the wall below the window had not intercepted what little light came into that horrid garret. After making the tour of my sad abode, my head lowered, as the cell was not more than five and a half feet high, I found by groping along that it formed three-quarters of a square of twelve feet. The fourth quarter was a kind of recess, which would have held a bed; but there was neither bed, nor table, nor chair, nor any furniture whatever, except a bucket—the use of which may be guessed, and a bench fixed in the wall a foot wide and four feet from the ground. On it I placed my cloak, my fine suit, and my hat trimmed with Spanish point and adorned with a beautiful white feather. The heat was great, and my instinct made me go mechanically to the grating, the only place where I could lean on my elbows. I could not see the window, but I saw the light in the garret, and rats of a fearful size, which walked unconcernedly about it; these horrible creatures coming close under my grating without shewing the slightest fear. At the sight of these I hastened to close up the round hole in the middle of the door with an inside shutter, for a visit from one of the rats would have frozen my blood. I passed eight hours in silence and without stirring, my arms all the time crossed on the top of the grating.

At last the clock roused me from my reverie, and I began to feel restless that no one came to

give me anything to eat or to bring me a bed whereon to sleep. I thought they might at least let me have a chair and some bread and water. I had no appetite, certainly: but were my gaolers to guess as much? And never in my life had I been so thirsty. I was quite sure, however, that somebody would come before the close of the day; but when I heard eight o'clock strike I became furious, knocking at the door, stamping my feet, fretting and fuming, and accompanying this useless hubbub with loud cries. After more than an hour of this wild exercise, seeing no one, without the slightest reason to think I could be heard, and shrouded in darkness, I shut the grating for fear of the rats, and threw myself at full length upon the floor. So cruel a desertion seemed to me unnatural, and I came to the conclusion that the Inquisitors had sworn my death. My investigation as to what I had done to deserve such a fate was not a long one, for in the most scrupulous examination of my conduct I could find no crimes. I was, it is true, a profligate, a gambler, a bold talker, a man who thought of little besides enjoying this present life, but in all that there was no offence against the state. Nevertheless, finding myself treated as a criminal, rage and despair made me express myself against the horrible despotism which oppressed me in a manner which I will leave my readers to guess, but which I will not repeat here. But notwithstanding my grief and anxiety, the hunger which began to make itself felt, and the

thirst which tormented me, and the hardness of the boards on which I lay, did not prevent exhausted nature from reasserting her rights; I fell asleep.

My strong constitution was in need of sleep; and in a young and healthy subject this imperious necessity silences all others, and in this way above all is sleep rightly termed the benefactor of man.

The clock striking midnight awoke me. How sad is the awaking when it makes one regret one's empty dreams. I could scarcely believe that I had spent three painless hours. As I lay on my left side, I stretched out my right hand to get my handkerchief, which I remembered putting on that side. I felt about for it, when—heavens! what was my surprise to feel another hand as cold as ice. The fright sent an electric shock through me, and my hair began to stand on end.

Never had I been so alarmed, nor should I have previously thought myself capable of experiencing such terror. I passed three or four minutes in a kind of swoon, not only motionless but incapable of thinking. As I got back my senses by degrees, I tried to make myself believe that the hand I fancied I had touched was a mere creature of my disordered imagination; and with this idea I stretched out my hand again, and again with the same result. Benumbed with fright, I uttered a piercing cry, and, dropping the hand I held, I drew back my arm, trembling all over.

Soon, as I got a little calmer and more capable

of reasoning, I concluded that a corpse had been placed beside me whilst I slept, for I was certain it was not there when I lay down.

"This," said I, "is the body of some strangled wretch, and they would thus warn me of the fate which is in store for me."

The thought maddened me; and my fear giving place to rage, for the third time I stretched my arm towards the icy hand, seizing it to make certain of the fact in all its atrocity, and wishing to get up, I rose upon my left elbow, and found that I had got hold of my other hand. Deadened by the weight of my body and the hardness of the boards, it had lost warmth, motion, and all sensation.

In spite of the humorous features in this incident, it did not cheer me up, but, on the contrary, inspired me with the darkest fancies. I saw that I was in a place where, if the false appeared true, the truth might appear false, where understanding was bereaved of half its prerogatives, where the imagination becoming affected would either make the reason a victim to empty hopes or to dark despair. I resolved to be on my guard; and for the first time in my life, at the age of thirty, I called philosophy to my assistance. I had within me all the seeds of philosophy, but so far I had had no need for it.

I am convinced that most men die without ever having thought, in the proper sense of the word, not so much for want of wit or of good

sense, but rather because the shock necessary to the reasoning faculty in its inception has never occurred to them to lift them out of their daily habits.

After what I had experienced, I could think of sleep no more, and to get up would have been useless as I could not stand upright, so I took the only sensible course and remained seated. I sat thus till four o'clock in the morning, the sun would rise at five, and I longed to see the day, for a presentiment which I held infallible told me that it would set me again at liberty. I was consumed with a desire for revenge, nor did I conceal it from myself. I saw myself at the head of the people, about to exterminate the Government which had oppressed me; I massacred all the aristocrats without pity; all must be shattered and brought to the dust. I was delirious; I knew the authors of my misfortune, and in my fancy I destroyed them. I restored the natural right common to all men of being obedient only to the law, and of being tried only by their peers and by laws to which they have agreed—in short, I built castles in Spain. Such is man when he has become the prey of a devouring passion. He does not suspect that the principle which moves him is not reason but wrath, its greatest enemy.

I waited for a less time than I had expected, and thus I became a little more quiet. At half-past four the deadly silence of the place—this hell of the living—was broken by the shriek of bolts being

shot back in the passages leading to my cell.

"Have you had time yet to think about what you will take to eat?" said the harsh voice of my gaoler from the wicket.

One is lucky when the insolence of a wretch like this only shews itself in the guise of jesting. I answered that I should like some rice soup, a piece of boiled beef, a roast, bread, wine, and water. I saw that the lout was astonished not to hear the lamentations he expected. He went away and came back again in a quarter of an hour to say that he was astonished I did not require a bed and the necessary pieces of furniture, "for" said he, "if you flatter yourself that you are only here for a night, you are very much mistaken."

"Then bring me whatever you think necessary."

"Where shall I go for it? Here is a pencil and paper; write it down."

I shewed him by writing where to go for my shirts, stockings, and clothes of all sorts, a bed, table, chair, the books which Messer-Grande had confiscated, paper, pens, and so forth. On my reading out the list to him (the lout did not know how to read) he cried, "Scratch out," said he, "scratch out books, paper, pens, looking-glass and razors, for all that is forbidden fruit here, and then give me some money to get your dinner." I had three sequins so I gave him one, and he went off. He spent an hour in the passages engaged, as I learnt afterwards, in attending on seven other

prisoners who were imprisoned in cells placed far apart from each other to prevent all communication.

About noon the gaoler reappeared followed by five guards, whose duty it was to serve the state prisoners. He opened the cell door to bring in my dinner and the furniture I had asked for. The bed was placed in the recess, my dinner was laid out on a small table, and I had to eat with an ivory spoon he had procured out of the money I had given him; all forks, knives, and edged tools being forbidden.

"Tell me what you would like for to-morrow," said he, "for I can only come here once a day at sunrise. The Lord High Secretary has told me to inform you that he will send you some suitable books, but those you wish for are forbidden."

"Thank him for his kindness in putting me by myself."

"I will do so, but you make a mistake in jesting thus."

"I don't jest at all, for I think truly that it is much better to be alone than to mingle with the scoundrels who are doubtless here."

"What, sir! scoundrels? Not at all, not at all. They are only respectable people here, who, for reasons known to their excellencies alone, have to be sequestered from society. You have been put by yourself as an additional punishment, and you want me to thank the secretary on that account?"

"I was not aware of that."

The fool was right, and I soon found it out. I discovered that a man imprisoned by himself can have no occupations. Alone in a gloomy cell where he only sees the fellow who brings his food once a day, where he cannot walk upright, he is the most wretched of men. He would like to be in hell, if he believes in it, for the sake of the company. So strong a feeling is this that I got to desire the company of a murderer, of one stricken with the plague, or of a bear. The loneliness behind the prison bars is terrible, but it must be learnt by experience to be understood, and such an experience I would not wish even to my enemies. To a man of letters in my situation, paper and ink would take away nine-tenths of the torture, but the wretches who persecuted me did not dream of granting me such an alleviation of my misery.

After the gaoler had gone, I set my table near the grating for the sake of the light, and sat down to dinner, but I could only swallow a few spoonfuls of soup. Having fasted for nearly forty-eight hours, it was not surprising that I felt ill. I passed the day quietly enough seated on my sofa, and proposing myself to read the "suitable books" which they had been good enough to promise me. I did not shut my eyes the whole night, kept awake by the hideous noise made by the rats, and by the deafening chime of the clock of St. Mark's, which seemed to be striking in my room. This double vexation was not my chief trouble,

and I daresay many of my readers will guess what I am going to speak of—namely, the myriads of fleas which held high holiday over me. These small insects drank my blood with unutterable voracity, their incessant bites gave me spasmodic convulsions and poisoned my blood.

At day-break, Lawrence (such was the gaoler's name) came to my cell and had my bed made, and the room swept and cleansed, and one of the guards gave me water wherewith to wash myself. I wanted to take a walk in the garret, but Lawrence told me that was forbidden. He gave me two thick books which I forbore to open, not being quite sure of repressing the wrath with which they might inspire me, and which the spy would have infallibly reported to his masters. After leaving me my fodder and two cut lemons he went away.

As soon as I was alone I ate my soup in a hurry, so as to take it hot, and then I drew as near as I could to the light with one of the books, and was delighted to find that I could see to read. I looked at the title, and read, "The Mystical City of Sister Mary of Jesus, of Agrada." I had never heard of it. The other book was by a Jesuit named Caravita. This fellow, a hypocrite like the rest of them, had invented a new cult of the "Adoration of the Sacred Heart of our Lord Jesus Christ." This, according to the author, was the part of our Divine Redeemer, which above all

others should be adored—a curious idea of a besotted ignoramus, with which I got disgusted at the first page, for to my thinking the heart is no more worthy a part than the lungs, stomach, or any other of the inwards. The "Mystical City" rather interested me.

I read in it the wild conceptions of a Spanish nun, devout to superstition, melancholy, shut in by convent walls, and swayed by the ignorance and bigotry of her confessors. All these grotesque, monstrous, and fantastic visions of hers were dignified with the name of revelations. The lover and bosom-friend of the Holy Virgin, she had received instructions from *God* Himself to write the life of His divine mother; the necessary information was furnished her by the *Holy Ghost.*

This life of Mary began, not with the day of her birth, but with her immaculate conception in the womb of Anne, her mother. This Sister Mary of Agrada was the head of a Franciscan convent founded by herself in her own house. After telling in detail all the deeds of her divine heroine whilst in her mother's womb, she informs us that at the age of three she swept and cleansed the house with the assistance of nine hundred servants, all of whom were angels whom God had placed at her disposal, under the command of Michael, who came and went between God and herself to conduct their mutual correspondence.

What strikes the judicious reader of the book

is the evident belief of the more than fanatical writer that nothing is due to her invention; everything is told in good faith and with full belief. The work contains the dreams of a visionary, who, without vanity but inebriated with the idea of God, thinks to reveal only the inspirations of the Divine Spirit.

The book was published with the permission of the very holy and very horrible Inquisition. I could not recover from my astonishment! Far from its stirring up in my breast a holy and simple zeal of religion, it inclined me to treat all the mystical dogmas of the Faith as fabulous.

Such works may have dangerous results; for example, a more susceptible reader than myself, or one more inclined to believe in the marvellous, runs the risk of becoming as great a visionary as the poor nun herself.

The need of doing something made me spend a week over this masterpiece of madness, the product of a hyper-exalted brain. I took care to say nothing to the gaoler about this fine work, but I began to feel the effects of reading it. As soon as I went off to sleep I experienced the disease which Sister Mary of Agrada had communicated to my mind weakened by melancholy, want of proper nourishment and exercise, bad air, and the horrible uncertainty of my fate. The wildness of my dreams made me laugh when I recalled them in my waking moments. If I had possessed the necessary materials

I would have written my visions down, and I might possibly have produced in my cell a still madder work than the one chosen with such insight by Cavalli.

This set me thinking how mistaken is the opinion which makes human intellect an absolute force; it is merely relative, and he who studies himself carefully will find only weakness. I perceived that though men rarely become mad, still such an event is well within the bounds of possibility, for our reasoning faculties are like powder, which, though it catches fire easily, will never catch fire at all without a spark. The book of the Spanish nun has all the properties necessary to make a man crack-brained; but for the poison to take effect he must be isolated, put under the Leads, and deprived of all other employments.

In November, 1767, as I was going from Pampeluna to Madrid, my coachman, Andrea Capello, stopped for us to dine in a town of Old Castille. So dismal and dreary a place did I find it that I asked its name. How I laughed when I was told that it was Agrada!

"Here, then," I said to myself, "did that saintly lunatic produce that masterpiece which but for M. Cavalli I should never have known."

An old priest, who had the highest possible opinion of me the moment I began to ask him about this truthful historian of the mother of Christ, shewed me the very place where she had

written it, and assured me that the father, mother, sister, and in short all the kindred of the blessed biographer, had been great saints in their generation. He told me, and spoke truly, that the Spaniards had solicited her canonisation at Rome, with that of the venerable Palafox. This "Mystical City," perhaps, gave Father Malagrida the idea of writing the life of St. Anne, written, also, at the dictation of the Holy Ghost, but the poor devil of a Jesuit had to suffer martyrdom for it—an additional reason for his canonization, if the horrible society ever comes to life again, and attains the universal power which is its secret aim.

At the end of eight or nine days I found myself moneyless. Lawrence asked me for some, but I had not got it.

"Where can I get some?"

"Nowhere."

What displeased this ignorant and gossiping fellow about me was my silence and my laconic manner of talking.

Next day he told me that the Tribunal had assigned me fifty sous per diem of which he would have to take charge, but that he would give me an account of his expenditure every month, and that he would spend the surplus on what I liked.

"Get me the *Leyden Gazette* twice a week."

"I can't do that, because it is not allowed by the authorities."

Sixty-five livres a month was more than I

wanted, since I could not eat more than I did: the great heat and the want of proper nourishment had weakened me. It was in the dog-days; the strength of the sun's rays upon the lead of the roof made my cell like a stove, so that the streams of perspiration which rolled off my poor body as I sat quite naked on my sofa-chair wetted the floor to right and left of me.

I had been in this hell-on-earth for fifteen days without any secretion from the bowels. At the end of this almost incredible time nature re-asserted herself, and I thought my last hour was come. The hæmorrhoidal veins were swollen to such an extent that the pressure on them gave me almost unbearable agony. To this fatal time I owe the inception of that sad infirmity of which I have never been able to completely cure myself. The recurrence of the same pains, though not so acute, remind me of the cause, and do not make my remembrance of it any the more agreeable. This disease got me compliments in Russia when I was there ten years later, and I found it in such esteem that I did not dare to complain. The same kind of thing happened to me at Constantinople, when I was complaining of a cold in the head in the presence of a Turk, who was thinking, I could see, that a dog of a Christian was not worthy of such a blessing.

The same day I sickened with a high fever and kept my bed. I said nothing to Lawrence about it,

but the day after, on finding my dinner untouched, he asked me how I was.

"Very well."

"That can't be, sir, as you have eaten nothing. You are ill, and you will experience the generosity of the Tribunal who will provide you, without fee or charge, with a physician, surgeon, and all necessary medicines."

He went out, returning after three hours without guards, holding a candle in his hand, and followed by a grave-looking personage; this was the doctor. I was in the height of the fever, which had not left me for three days. He came up to me and began to ask me questions, but I told him that with my confessor and my doctor I would only speak apart. The doctor told Lawrence to leave the room, but on the refusal of that Argus to do so, he went away saying that I was dangerously ill, possibly unto death. For this I hoped, for my life as it had become was no longer my chiefest good. I was somewhat glad also to think that my pitiless persecutors might, on hearing of my condition, be forced to reflect on the cruelty of the treatment to which they had subjected me.

Four hours afterwards I heard the noise of bolts once more, and the doctor came in holding the candle himself. Lawrence remained outside. I had become so weak that I experienced a grateful restfulness. Kindly nature does not suffer a man seriously ill to feel weary. I was delighted to hear

that my infamous turnkey was outside, for since his explanation of the iron collar I had looked on him with loathing.

In a quarter of an hour I had told the doctor all.

"If we want to get well," said he, "we must not be melancholy."

"Write me the prescription, and take it to the only apothecary who can make it up. M. Cavalli is the bad doctor who exhibited 'The Heart of Jesus,' and 'The Mystical City.'"

"Those two preparations are quite capable of having brought on the fever and the hæmorrhoids. I will not forsake you."

After making me a large jug of lemonade, and telling me to drink frequently, he went away. I slept soundly, dreaming fantastic dreams.

In the morning the doctor came again with Lawrence and a surgeon, who bled me. The doctor left me some medicine which he told me to take in the evening, and a bottle of soup. "I have obtained leave," said he, "for you to move into the garret where the heat is less, and the air better than here."

"I decline the favour, as I abominate the rats, which you know nothing about, and which would certainly get into my bed."

"What a pity! I told M. Cavalli that he had almost killed you with his books, and he has commissioned me to take them back, and to give you Boethius; and here it is."

"I am much obliged to you. I like it better than Seneca, and I am sure it will do me good."

"I am leaving you a very necessary instrument, and some barley water for you to refresh yourself with."

He visited me four times, and pulled me through; my constitution did the rest, and my appetite returned. At the beginning of September I found myself, on the whole, very well, suffering from no actual ills except the heat, the vermin, and weariness, for I could not be always reading Boethius.

One day Lawrence told me that I might go out of my cell to wash myself whilst the bed was being made and the room swept. I took advantage of the favour to walk up and down for the ten minutes taken by these operations, and as I walked hard the rats were alarmed and dared not shew themselves. On the same day Lawrence gave me an account of my money, and brought himself in as my debtor to the amount of thirty livres, which, however, I could not put into my pocket. I left the money in his hands, telling him to lay it out on masses on my behalf, feeling sure that he would make quite a different use of it, and he thanked me in a tone that persuaded me he would be his own priest. I gave him the money every month, and I never saw a priest's receipt. Lawrence was wise to celebrate the sacrifice at the tavern; the money was useful to someone at all events.

I lived from day to day, persuading myself every night that the next day I should be at liberty; but as I was each day deceived, I decided in my poor brain that I should be set free without fail on the 1st of October, on which day the new Inquisitors begin their term of office. According to this theory, my imprisonment would last as long as the authority of the present Inquisitors, and thus was explained the fact that I had seen nothing of the secretary, who would otherwise have undoubtedly come to interrogate, examine, and convict me of my crimes, and finally to announce my doom. All this appeared to me unanswerable, because it seemed natural, but it was fallacious under the Leads, where nothing is done after the natural order. I imagined the Inquisitors must have discovered my innocence and the wrong they had done me, and that they only kept me in prison for form's sake, and to protect their repute from the stain of committing injustice; hence I concluded that they would give me my freedom when they laid down their tyrannical authority. My mind was so composed and quiet that I felt as if I could forgive them, and forget the wrong that they had done me. "How can they leave me here to the mercy of their successors," I thought, "to whom they cannot leave any evidence capable of condemning me?" I could not believe that my sentence had been pronounced and confirmed, without my being told of it, or of the reasons by which my

judges had been actuated. I was so certain that I had right on my side, that I reasoned accordingly; but this was not the attitude I should have assumed towards a court which stands aloof from all the courts in the world for its unbounded absolutism. To prove anyone guilty, it is only necessary for the Inquisitors to proceed against him; so there is no need to speak to him, and when he is condemned it would be useless to announce to the prisoner his sentence, as his consent is not required, and they prefer to leave the poor wretch the feeling of hope; and certainly, if he were told the whole process, imprisonment would not be shortened by an hour. The wise man tells no one of his business, and the business of the Tribunal of Venice is only to judge and to doom. The guilty party is not required to have any share in the matter; he is like a nail, which to be driven into a wall needs only to be struck.

To a certain extent I was acquainted with the ways of the Colossus which was crushing me under foot, but there are things on earth which one can only truly understand by experience. If amongst my readers there are any who think such laws unjust, I forgive them, as I know they have a strong likeness to injustice; but let me tell them that they are also necessary, as a tribunal like the Venetian could not subsist without them. Those who maintain these laws in full vigour are senators, chosen from amongst the fittest for that office, and with a reputation for honour and virtue.

The last day of September I passed a sleepless night, and was on thorns to see the dawn appear, so sure was I that that day would make me free. The reign of those villains who had made me a captive drew to a close; but the dawn appeared, Lawrence came as usual, and told me nothing new. For five or six days I hovered between rage and despair, and then I imagined that for some reasons which to me were unfathomable they had decided to keep me prisoner for the remainder of my days. This awful idea only made me laugh, for I knew that it was in my power to remain a slave for no long time, but only till I should take it into my own hands to break my prison. I knew that I should escape or die: *Deliberatâ morte ferocior.*

In the beginning of November I seriously formed the plan of forcibly escaping from a place where I was forcibly kept. I began to rack my brains to find a way of carrying the idea into execution, and I conceived a hundred schemes, each one bolder than the other, but a new plan always made me give up the one I was on the point of accepting.

While I was immersed in this toilsome sea of thought, an event happened which brought home to me the sad state of mind I was in.

I was standing up in the garret looking towards the top, and my glance fell on the great beam, not shaking but turning on its right side, and then, by a slow and interrupted movement in the opposite direction, turning again and replacing itself in its

original position. As I lost my balance at the same time, I knew it was the shock of an earthquake. Lawrence and the guards, who just then came out of my room, said that they, too, had felt the earth tremble. In such despair was I that this incident made me feel a joy which I kept to myself, saying nothing. Four or five seconds after the same movement occurred, and I could not refrain from saying,—

"Another, O my God! but stronger."

The guards, terrified with what they thought the impious ravings of a desperate madman, fled in horror.

After they were gone, as I was pondering the matter over, I found that I looked upon the overthrow of the Doge's palace as one of the events which might lead to liberty; the mighty pile, as it fell, might throw me safe and sound, and consequently free, on St. Mark's Place, or at the worst it could only crush me beneath its ruins. Situated as I was, liberty reckons for all, and life for nothing, or rather for very little. Thus in the depths of my soul I began to grow mad.

This earthquake shock was the result of those which at the same time destroyed Lisbon.

CHAPTER X

VARIOUS ADVENTURES—MY COMPANIONS—I PREPARE TO ESCAPE—CHANGE OF CELL

To make the reader understand how I managed to escape from a place like the Leads, I must explain the nature of the locality.

The Leads, used for the confinement of state prisoners, are in fact the lofts of the ducal palace, and take their name from the large plates of lead with which the roof is covered. One can only reach them through the gates of the palace, the prison buildings, or by the bridge of which I have spoken called the Bridge of Sighs. It is impossible to reach the cells without passing through the hall where the State Inquisitors hold their meetings, and their secretary has the sole charge of the key, which he only gives to the gaoler for a short time in the early morning whilst he is attending to the prisoners. This is done at day-break, because otherwise the guards as they came and went would be in the way of those who have to do with the Council of Ten, as the Council meets every day in a hall called The Bus-

sola, which the guards have to cross every time they go to the Leads.

The prisons are under the roof on two sides of the palace; three to the west (mine being among the number) and four to the east. On the west the roof looks into the court of the palace, and on the east straight on to the canal called Rio di Palazzo. On this side the cells are well lighted, and one can stand up straight, which is not the case in the prison where I was, which was distinguished by the name of *Trave,* on account of the enormous beam which deprived me of light. The floor of my cell was directly over the ceiling of the Inquisitors' hall, where they commonly met only at night after the sitting of the Council of Ten of which the whole three are members.

As I knew my ground and the habits of the Inquisitors perfectly well, the only way to escape—the only way at least which I deemed likely to succeed—was to make a hole in the floor of my cell; but to do this tools must be obtained—a difficult task in a place where all communication with the outside world was forbidden, where neither letters nor visits were allowed. To bribe a guard a good deal of money would be necessary, and I had none. And supposing that the gaoler and his two guards allowed themselves to be strangled—for my hands were my only weapons—there was always a third guard on duty at the door of the passage, which he locked, and would not open till his fellow who wished to pass through gave him the password. In spite of all these difficulties my

only thought was how to escape, and as Boethius gave me no hints on this point I read him no more, and as I was certain that the difficulty was only to be solved by stress of thinking I centered all my thoughts on this one object.

It has always been my opinion that when a man sets himself determinedly to do something, and thinks of nought but his design, he must succeed despite all difficulties in his path: such an one may make himself Pope or Grand Vizier, he may overturn an ancient line of kings—provided that he knows how to seize on his opportunity, and be a man of wit and pertinacity. To succeed one must count on being fortunate and despise all ill success, but it is a most difficult operation.

Towards the middle of November, Lawrence told me that Messer-Grande had a prisoner in his hands whom the new secretary, Businello, had ordered to be placed in the worst cell, and who consequently was going to share mine. He told me that on the secretary's reminding him that I looked upon it as a favour to be left alone, he answered that I had grown wiser in the four months of my imprisonment. I was not sorry to hear the news or that there was a new secretary. This M. Pierre Businello was a worthy man whom I knew at Paris. He afterwards went to London as ambassador of the Republic.

In the afternoon I heard the noise of the bolts, and presently Lawrence and two guards entered leading in a young man who was weeping bitterly;

and after taking off his handcuffs they shut him up with me, and went out without saying a word. I was lying on my bed, and he could not see me. I was amused at his astonishment. Being, fortunately for himself, seven or eight inches shorter than I, he was able to stand upright, and he began to inspect my arm-chair, which he doubtless thought was meant for his own use. Glancing at the ledge above the grating he saw Boethius, took it up, opened it, and put it down with a kind of passion, probably because being in Latin it was of no use to him. Continuing his inspection of the cell he went to the left, and groping about was much surprised to find clothes. He approached the recess, and stretching out his hand he touched me, and immediately begged my pardon in a respectful manner. I asked him to sit down, and we were friends.

"Who are you?" said I.

"I am Maggiorin, of Vicenza. My father, who was a coachman, kept me at school till I was eleven, by which time I had learnt to read and write; I was afterwards apprenticed to a barber, where I learnt my business thoroughly. After that I became valet to the Count of X——. I had been in the service of the nobleman for two years when his daughter came from the convent. It was my duty to do her hair, and by degrees I fell in love with her, and inspired her with a reciprocal passion. After having sworn a thousand times to exist only for one another, we gave ourselves up to the task of shewing each other marks

of our affection, the result of which was that the state of the young countess discovered all. An old and devoted servant was the first to find out our connection and the condition of my mistress, and she told her that she felt in duty bound to tell her father, but my sweetheart succeeded in making her promise to be silent, saying that in the course of the week she herself would tell him through her confessor. She informed me of all this, and instead of going to confession we prepared for flight. She had laid hands on a good sum of money and some diamonds which had belonged to her mother, and we were to set out for Milan to-night. But to-day the count called me after dinner, and giving me a letter, he told me to start at once and to deliver it with my own hand to the person to whom it was addressed at Venice. He spoke to me so kindly and quietly that I had not the slightest suspicion of the fate in store for me. I went to get my cloak, said good-bye to my little wife, telling her that I should soon return. Seeing deeper below the surface than I, and perchance having a presentiment of my misfortune, she was sick at heart. I came here in hot haste, and took care to deliver the fatal letter. They made me wait for an answer, and in the mean time I went to an inn; but as I came out I was arrested and put in the guard-room, where I was kept till they brought me here. I suppose, sir, I might consider the young countess as my wife?"

"You make a mistake."

"But nature——"

"Nature, when a man listens to her and nothing else, takes him from one folly to another, till she puts him under the Leads."

"I am under the Leads, then, am I?"

"As I am."

The poor young man shed some bitter tears. He was a well-made lad, open, honest, and amorous beyond words. I secretly pardoned the countess, and condemned the count for exposing his daughter to such temptation. A shepherd who shuts up the wolf in the fold should not complain if his flock be devoured. In all his tears and lamentations he thought not of himself but always of his sweetheart. He thought that the gaoler would return and bring him some food and a bed; but I undeceived him, and offered him a share of what I had. His heart, however, was too full for him to eat. In the evening I gave him my mattress, on which he passed the night, for though he looked neat and clean enough I did not care to have him to sleep with me, dreading the results of a lover's dreams. He neither understood how wrongly he had acted, nor how the count was constrained to punish him publicly as a cloak to the honour of his daughter and his house.

The next day he was given a mattress and a dinner to the value of fifteen sous, which the Tribunal had assigned to him, either as a favour or a charity, for the word justice would not be appropriate in speaking of this terrible body. I told the gaoler

that my dinner would suffice for the two of us, and that he could employ the young man's allowance in saying masses in his usual manner. He agreed willingly, and having told him that he was lucky to be in my company, he said that we could walk in the garret for half an hour. I found this walk an excellent thing for my health and my plan of escape, which, however, I could not carry out for eleven months afterwards. At the end of this resort of rats, I saw a number of old pieces of furniture thrown on the ground to the right and left of two great chests, and in front of a large pile of papers sewn up into separate volumes. I helped myself to a dozen of them for the sake of the reading, and I found them to be accounts of trials, and very diverting; for I was allowed to read these papers, which had once contained such secrets. I found some curious replies to the judges' questions respecting the seduction of maidens, gallantries carried a little too far by persons employed in girls' schools, facts relating to confessors who had abused their penitents, schoolmasters convicted of pederasty with their pupils, and guardians who had seduced their wards. Some of the papers dating two or three centuries back, in which the style and the manners illustrated gave me considerable entertainment. Among the pieces of furniture on the floor I saw a warming-pan, a kettle, a fire-shovel, a pair of tongs, some old candle-sticks, some earthenware pots, and even a syringe. From this I concluded that some prisoner of distinction

had been allowed to make use of these articles. But what interested me most was a straight iron bar as thick as my thumb, and about a foot and a half long. However, I left everything as it was, as my plans had not been sufficiently ripened by time for me to appropriate any object in particular.

One day towards the end of the month my companion was taken away, and Lawrence told me that he had been condemned to the prisons known as *The Fours,* which are within the same walls as the ordinary prisons, but belong to the State Inquisitors. Those confined in them have the privilege of being able to call the gaoler when they like. The prisons are gloomy, but there is an oil lamp in the midst which gives the necessary light, and there is no fear of fire as everything is made of marble. I heard, a long time after, that the unfortunate Maggiorin was there for five years, and was afterwards sent to Cerigo for ten. I do not know whether he ever came from there. He had kept me good company, and this I discovered as soon as he was gone, for in a few days I became as melancholy as before. Fortunately, I was still allowed my walk in the garret, and I began to examine its contents with more minuteness. One of the chests was full of fine paper, pieces of cardboard, uncut pens, and clews of pack thread; the other was fastened down. A piece of polished black marble, an inch thick, six inches long, and three broad, attracted my attention, and I possessed myself of it without knowing what I was going to do with it,

and I secreted it in my cell, covering it up with my shirts.

A week after Maggiorin had gone, Lawrence told me that in all probability I should soon get another companion. This fellow Lawrence, who at bottom was a mere gabbling fool, began to get uneasy at my never asking him any questions. This fondness for gossip was not altogether appropriate to his office, but where is one to find beings absolutely vile? There are such persons, but happily they are few and far between, and are not to be sought for in the lower orders. Thus my gaoler found himself unable to hold his tongue, and thought that the reason I asked no questions must be that I thought him incapable of answering them; and feeling hurt at this, and wishing to prove to me that I made a mistake, he began to gossip without being solicited.

"I believe you will often have visitors," said he, "as the other six cells have each two prisoners, who are not likely to be sent to the Fours." I made him no reply, but he went on, in a few seconds, "They send to the Fours all sorts of people after they have been sentenced, though they know nothing of that. The prisoners whom I have charge of under the Leads are like yourself, persons of note, and are only guilty of deeds of which the inquisitive must know nothing. If you knew, sir, what sort of people shared your fate, you would be astonished. It's true that you are called a man of parts; but you will pardon me. . . . You know that all men of parts

are treated well here. You take me, I see. Fifty sous a day, that's something. They give three livres to a citizen, four to a gentleman, and eight to a foreign count. I ought to know, I think, as everything goes through my hands."

He then commenced to sing his own praises, which consisted of negative clauses.

"I'm no thief, nor traitor, nor greedy, nor malicious, nor brutal, as all my predecessors were, and when I have drunk a pint over and above I am all the better for it. If my father had sent me to school I should have learnt to read and write, and I might be Messer-Grande to-day, but that's not my fault. M. André Diedo has a high opinion of me. My wife, who cooks for you every day, and is only twenty-four, goes to see him when she will, and he will have her come in without ceremony, even if he be in bed, and that's more than he'll do for a senator. I promise you you will be always having the new-comers in your cell, but never for any length of time, for as soon as the secretary has got what he wants to know from them, he sends them to their place—to the Fours, to some fort, or to the Levant; and if they be foreigners they are sent across the frontier, for our Government does not hold itself master of the subjects of other princes, if they be not in its service. The clemency of the Court is beyond compare; there's not another in the world that treats its prisoners so well. They say it's cruel to disallow writing and visitors; but that's foolish, for what are writing and

company but waste of time? You will tell me that you have nothing to do, but we can't say as much."

Such was, almost word for word, the first harangue with which the fellow honoured me, and I must say I found it amusing. I saw that if the man had been less of a fool he would most certainly have been more of a scoundrel.

The next day brought me a new messmate, who was treated as Maggiorin had been, and I thus found it necessary to buy another ivory spoon, for as the new-comers were given nothing on the first day of their imprisonment I had to do all the honours of the cell.

My new mate made me a low bow, for my beard, now four inches long, was still more imposing than my figure. Lawrence often lent me scissors to cut my nails, but he was forbidden, under pain of very heavy punishment, to let me touch my beard. I knew not the reason of this order, but I ended by becoming used to my beard as one gets used to everything.

The new-comer was a man of about fifty, approaching my size, a little bent, thin, with a large mouth, and very bad teeth. He had small grey eyes hidden under thick eyebrows of a red colour, which made him look like an owl; and this picture was set off by a small black wig, which exhaled a disagreeable odour of oil, and by a dress of coarse grey cloth. He accepted my offer of dinner, but was reserved,

and said not a word the whole day, and I was also silent, thinking he would soon recover the use of his tongue, as he did the next day.

Early in the morning he was given a bed and a bag full of linen. The gaoler asked him, as he had asked me, what he would have for dinner, and for money to pay for it.

"I have no money."

"What! a moneyed man like you have no money?"

"I haven't a sou."

"Very good; in that case I will get you some army biscuit and water, according to instructions."

He went out, and returned directly afterwards with a pound and a half of biscuit, and a pitcher, which he set before the prisoner, and then went away.

Left alone with this phantom I heard a sigh, and my pity made me break the silence.

"Don't sigh, sir, you shall share my dinner. But I think you have made a great mistake in coming here without money."

"I have some, but it does not do to let those harpies know of it."

"And so you condemn yourself to bread and water. Truly a wise proceeding! Do you know the reason of your imprisonment?"

"Yes, sir, and I will endeavour in a few words to inform you of it."

"My name is Squaldo Nobili. My father was a countryman who had me taught reading and writ-

ing, and at his death left me his cottage and the small patch of ground belonging to it. I lived in Friuli, about a day's journey from the Marshes of Udine. As a torrent called Corno often damaged my little property, I determined to sell it and to set up in Venice, which I did ten years ago. I brought with me eight thousand livres in fair sequins, and knowing that in this happy commonwealth all men enjoyed the blessings of liberty, I believed that by utilizing my capital I might make a little income, and I began to lend money on security. Relying on my thrift, my judgment, and my knowledge of the world, I chose this business in preference to all others. I rented a small house in the neighbourhood of the Royal Canal, and having furnished it I lived there in comfort by myself; and in the course of two years I found I had made a profit of ten thousand livres, though I had expended two thousand on household expenses as I wished to live in comfort. In this fashion I saw myself in a fair way of making a respectable fortune in time; but one day, having lent a Jew two sequins upon some books, I found one amongst them called "La Sagesse," by Charron. It was then I found out how good a thing it is to be able to read, for this book, which you, sir, may not have read, contains all that a man need know—purging him of all the prejudices of his childhood. With Charron good-bye to hell and all the empty terrors of a future life; one's eyes are opened, one knows the way to bliss, one becomes wise indeed.

Do you, sir, get this book, and pay no heed to those foolish persons who would tell you this treasure is not to be approached."

This curious discourse made me know my man. As to Charron, I had read the book though I did not know it had been translated into Italian. The author who was a great admirer of Montaigne thought to surpass his model, but toiled in vain. He is not much read despite the prohibition to read his works, which should have given them some popularity. He had the impudence to give his book the title of one of Solomon's treatises—a circumstance which does not say much for his modesty. My companion went on as follows:

"Set free by Charron from any scruples I still might have, and from those false ideas so hard to rid one's self of, I pushed my business in such sort, that at the end of six years I could lay my hand on ten thousand sequins. There is no need for you to be astonished at that, as in this wealthy city gambling, debauchery, and idleness set all the world awry and in continual need of money; so do the wise gather what the fool drops.

"Three years ago a certain Count Sériman came and asked me to take from him five hundred sequins, to put them in my business, and to give him half profits. All he asked for was an obligation in which I promised to return him the whole sum on demand. At the end of a year I sent him seventy-five sequins, which made fifteen per cent. on his money; he gave

me a receipt for it, but was ill pleased. He was wrong, for I was in no need of money, and had not used his for business purposes. At the end of the second year, out of pure generosity, I sent him the same amount; but we came to a quarrel and he demanded the return of the five hundred sequins. 'Certainly,' I said, 'but I must deduct the hundred and fifty you have already received.' Enraged at this he served me with a writ for the payment of the whole sum. A clever lawyer undertook my defence, and was able to gain me two years. Three months ago I was spoken to as to an agreement, and I refused to hear of it, but fearing violence I went to the Abbé Justiniani, the Spanish ambassador's secretary, and for a small sum he let me a house in the precincts of the Embassy, where one is safe from surprises. I was quite willing to let Count Sériman have his money, but I claimed a reduction of a hundred sequins on account of the costs of the lawsuit. A week ago the lawyers on both sides came to me. I shewed them a purse of two hundred and fifty sequins, and told them they might take it, but not a penny more. They went away without saying a word, both wearing an ill-pleased air, of which I took no notice. Three days ago the Abbé Justiniani told me that the ambassador had thought fit to give permission to the State Inquisitors to send their men at once to my house to make search therein. I thought the thing impossible under the shelter of a foreign ambassador, and instead of taking the usual precautions, I waited

the approach of the men-at-arms, only putting my money in a place of safety. At day-break Messer-Grande came to the house, and asked me for three hundred and fifty sequins, and on my telling him that I hadn't a farthing he seized me, and here I am."

I shuddered, less at having such an infamous companion than at his evidently considering me as his equal, for if he had thought of me in any other light he would certainly not have told me this long tale, doubtless in the belief that I should take his part. In all the folly about Charron with which he tormented me in the three days we were together, I found by bitter experience the truth of the Italian proverb: *Guardati da colui che non ha letto che un libro solo.* By reading the work of the misguided priest he had become an Atheist, and of this he made his boast all the day long. In the afternoon Lawrence came to tell him to come and speak with the secretary. He dressed himself hastily, and instead of his own shoes he took mine without my seeing him. He came back in half an hour in tears, and took out of his shoes two purses containing three hundred and fifty sequins, and, the gaoler going before, he went to take them to the secretary. A few moments afterwards he returned, and taking his cloak went away. Lawrence told me that he had been set at liberty. I thought, and with good reason, that, to make him acknowledge his debt and pay it, the secretary had threatened him with the torture; and if it were only used in similar cases, I, who detest

the principle of torture, would be the first to proclaim its utility.

On New Year's Day, 1736, I received my presents. Lawrence brought me a dressing-gown lined with fox-skin, a coverlet of wadded silk, and a bear-skin bag for me to put my legs in, which I welcomed gladly, for the coldness was unbearable as the heat in August. Lawrence told me that I might spend to the amount of six sequins a month, that I might have what books I liked, and take in the newspaper, and that this present came from M. de Bragadin. I asked him for a pencil, and I wrote upon a scrap of paper: *"I am grateful for the kindness of the Tribunal and the goodness of M. de Bragadin."*

The man who would know what were my feelings at all this must have been in a similar situation to my own. In the first gush of feeling I forgave my oppressors, and was on the point of giving up the idea of escape; so easily shall you move a man that you have brought low and overwhelmed with misfortune. Lawrence told me that M. de Bragadin had come before the three Inquisitors, and that on his knees, and with tears in his eyes, he had entreated them to let him give me this mark of his affection if I were still in the land of the living; the Inquisitors were moved, and were not able to refuse his request.

I wrote down without delay the names of the books I wanted.

One fine morning, as I was walking in the garret,

my eyes fell on the iron bar I have mentioned, and I saw that it might very easily be made into a defensive or offensive weapon. I took possession of it, and having hidden it under my dressing-gown I conveyed it into my cell. As soon as I was alone, I took the piece of black marble, and I found that I had to my hand an excellent whetstone; for by rubbing the bar with the stone I obtained a very good edge.

My interest roused in this work in which I was but an apprentice, and in the fashion in which I seemed likely to become possessed of an instrument totally prohibited under the Leads, impelled, perhaps, also by my vanity to make a weapon without any of the necessary tools, and incited by my very difficulties (for I worked away till dark without anything to hold my whetstone except my left hand, and without a drop of oil to soften the iron), I made up my mind to persevere in my difficult task. My saliva served me in the stead of oil, and I toiled eight days to produce eight edges terminating in a sharp point, the edges being an inch and a half in length. My bar thus sharpened formed an eight-sided dagger, and would have done justice to a first-rate cutler. No one can imagine the toil and trouble I had to bear, nor the patience required to finish this difficult task without any other tools than a loose piece of stone. I put myself, in fact, to a kind of torture unknown to the tyrants of all ages. My right arm had become so stiff that I could hardly move it; the palm of my hand was covered with a

large scar, the result of the numerous blisters caused by the hardness and the length of the work. No one would guess the sufferings I underwent to bring my work to completion.

Proud of what I had done, without thinking what use I could make of my weapon, my first care was to hide it in such a manner as would defy a minute search. After thinking over a thousand plans, to all of which there was some objection, I cast my eyes on my arm-chair, and there I contrived to hide it so as to be secure from all suspicion. Thus did Providence aid me to contrive a wonderful and almost inconceivable plan of escape. I confess to a feeling of vanity, not because I eventually succeeded —for I owed something to good luck—but because I was brave enough to undertake such a scheme in spite of the difficulties which might have ruined my plans and prevented my ever attaining liberty.

After thinking for three or four days as to what I should do with the bar I had made into an edged tool, as thick as a walking-stick and twenty inches long, I determined that the best plan would be to make a hole in the floor under my bed.

I was sure that the room below my cell was no other than the one in which I had seen M. Cavalli. I knew that this room was opened every morning, and I felt persuaded that, after I had made my hole, I could easily let myself down with my sheets, which I would make into a rope and fasten to my bed. Once there, I would hide under the table of the

court, and in the morning, when the door was opened, I could escape and get to a place of safety before anyone could follow me. I thought it possible that a sentry might be placed in the hall, but my short pike ought to soon rid me of him. The floor might be of double or even of triple thickness, and this thought puzzled me; for in that case how was I to prevent the guard sweeping out the room throughout the two months my work might last. If I forbade them to do so, I might rouse suspicion; all the more as, to free myself of the fleas, I had requested them to sweep out the cell every day, and in sweeping they would soon discover what I was about. I must find some way out of this difficulty.

I began by forbidding them to sweep, without giving any reason. A week after, Lawrence asked me why I did so. I told him because of the dust which might make me cough violently and give me some fatal injury.

"I will make them water the floor," said he.

"That would be worse, Lawrence, for the damp might cause a plethora."

In this manner I obtained a week's respite, but at the end of that time the lout gave orders that my cell should be swept. He had the bed carried out into the garret, and on pretence of having the sweeping done with greater care, he lighted a candle. This let me know that the rascal was suspicious of something; but I was crafty enough to take no notice of him, and so far from giving up my plea, I only

thought how I could put it in good train. Next morning I pricked my finger and covered my handkerchief with the blood, and then awaited Lawrence in bed. As soon as he came I told him that I had coughed so violently as to break a blood-vessel, which had made me bring up all the blood he saw. "Get me a doctor." The doctor came, ordered me to be bled, and wrote me a prescription. I told him it was Lawrence's fault, as he had persisted in having the room swept. The doctor blamed him for doing so, and just as if I had asked him he told us of a young man who had died from the same cause, and said that there was nothing more dangerous than breathing in dust. Lawrence called all the gods to witness that he had only had the room swept for my sake, and promised it should not happen again. I laughed to myself, for the doctor could not have played his part better if I had given him the word. The guards who were there were delighted, and said they would take care only to sweep the cells of those prisoners who had angered them.

When the doctor was gone, Lawrence begged my pardon, and assured me that all the other prisoners were in good health although their cells were swept out regularly.

"But what the doctor says is worth considering," said he, "and I shall tell them all about it, for I look upon them as my children."

The blood-letting did me good, as it made me sleep, and relieved me of the spasms with which I

was sometimes troubled. I had regained my appetite and was getting back my strength every day, but the time to set about my work was not yet come; it was still too cold, and I could not hold the bar for any length of time without my hand becoming stiff. My scheme required much thought. I had to exercise boldness and foresight to rid myself of troubles which chance might bring to pass or which I could foresee. The situation of a man who had to act as I had, is an unhappy one, but in risking all for all half its bitterness vanishes.

The long nights of winter distressed me, for I had to pass nineteen mortal hours in darkness; and on the cloudy days, which are common enough at Venice, the light I had was not sufficient for me to be able to read. Without any distractions I fell back on the idea of my escape, and a man who always thinks on one subject is in danger of becoming a monomaniac. A wretched kitchen-lamp would have made me happy, but how am I to get such a thing? O blessed prerogative of thought! how happy was I when I thought I had found a way to possess myself of such a treasure! To make such a lamp I required a vase, wicks, oil, a flint and steel, tinder, and matches. A porringer would do for the vase, and I had one which was used for cooking eggs in butter. Pretending that the common oil did not agree with me, I got them to buy me Lucca oil for my salad, and my cotton counterpane would furnish me with wicks. I then said I had the toothache, and asked Lawrence

to get me a pumice-stone, but as he did not know what I meant I told him that a musket-flint would do as well if it were soaked in vinegar for a day, and then being applied to the tooth the pain would be eased. Lawrence told me that the vinegar I had was excellent, and that I could soak the stone myself, and he gave me three or four flints he had in his pocket. All I had to do was to get some sulphur and tinder, and the procuring of these two articles set all my wits to work. At last fortune came to my assistance.

I had suffered from a kind of rash, which as it came off had left some red spots on my arms, and occasionally caused me some irritation. I told Lawrence to ask the doctor for a cure, and the next day he brought me a piece of paper which the secretary had seen, and on which the doctor had written, "Regulate the food for a day, and the skin will be cured by four ounces of oil of sweet almonds or an ointment of flour of sulphur, but this local application is hazardous."

"Never mind the danger," said I to Lawrence; "buy me the ointment, or rather get me the sulphur, as I have some butter by me, and I can make it up myself. Have you any matches? Give me a few."

He found some in his pockets, and he gave me them.

What a small thing brings comfort in distress!

But in my place these matches were no small thing, but rather a great treasure.

I had puzzled my head for several hours as to what substitute I could find for tinder—the only thing I still lacked, and which I could not ask for under any pretence whatsoever—when I remembered that I had told the tailor to put some under the armpits of my coat to prevent the perspiration spoiling the stuff. The coat, quite new, was before me, and my heart began to beat, but supposing the tailor had not put it in! Thus I hung between hope and fear. I had only to take a step to know all; but such a step would have been decisive, and I dared not take it. At last I drew nigh, and feeling myself unworthy of such mercies I fell on my knees and fervently prayed of God that the tailor might not have forgotten the tinder. After this heartfelt prayer I took my coat, unsewed it, and found—the tinder! My joy knew no bounds. I naturally gave thanks to God, since it was with confidence in Him that I took courage and searched my coat, and I returned thanks to Him with all my heart.

I now had all the necessary materials, and I soon made myself a lamp. Let the reader imagine my joy at having in a manner made light in the midst of darkness, and it was no less sweet because against the orders of my infamous oppressors. Now there was no more night for me, and also no more salad, for though I was very fond of it the need of keeping the oil to give light caused me to make this sacrifice

without it costing me many pangs. I fixed upon the first Monday in Lent to begin the difficult work of breaking through the floor, for I suspected that in the tumult of the carnival I might have some visitors, and I was in the right.

At noon, on Quinquagesima Sunday, I heard the noise of the bolts, and presently Lawrence entered, followed by a thick-set man whom I recognized as the Jew, Gabriel Schalon, known for lending money to young men.

We knew each other, so exchanged compliments. His company was by no means agreeable to me, but my opinion was not asked. He began by congratulating me on having the pleasure of his society; and by way of answer I offered him to share my dinner, but he refused, saying he would only take a little soup, and would keep his appetite for a better supper at his own house.

"When?"

"This evening. You heard when I asked for my bed he told me that we would talk about that to-morrow. That means plainly that I shall have no need of it. And do you think it likely that a man like me would be left without anything to eat?"

"That was my experience."

"Possibly, but between ourselves our cases are somewhat different; and without going any farther into that question, the Inquisitors have made a mistake in arresting me, and they will be in some trouble, I am certain, as to how to atone for doing so."

"They will possibly give you a pension. A man of your importance has to be conciliated."

"True, there's not a broker on the exchange more useful than myself, and the five sages have often profited by the advice I have given them. My detention is a curious incident, which, perchance, will be of service to you."

"Indeed. How, may I ask?"

"I will get you out of here in a month's time. I know to whom to speak and what way to do it."

"I reckon on you, then."

"You may do so."

This knave and fool together believed himself to be somebody. He volunteered to inform me as to what was being said of me in the town, but as he only related the idle tales of men as ignorant as himself, he wearied me, and to escape listening to him I took up a book. The fellow had the impudence to ask me not to read, as he was very fond of talking, but henceforth he talked only to himself. I did not dare to light my lamp before this creature, and as night drew on he decided on accepting some bread and Cyprus wine, and he was afterwards obliged to do as best he could with my mattress, which was now the common bed of all new-comers.

In the morning he had a bed and some food from his own house. I was burdened with this wretched fellow for two months, for before condemning him to The Fours the secretary had several interviews with him to bring to light his knaveries, and to

oblige him to cancel a goodly number of illegal agreements. He confessed to me himself that he had bought of M. Domenico Micheli the right to moneys which could not belong to the buyer till after the father of the seller was dead. "It's true," said he, "that he agreed to give me fifty per cent., but you must consider that if he died before his father I should lose all." At last, seeing that my cursed fellow did not go, I determined to light my lamp again after having made him promise to observe secrecy. He only kept his promise while he was with me, as Lawrence knew all about it, but luckily he attached no importance to the fact.

This unwelcome guest was a true burden to me, as he not only prevented me from working for my escape but also from reading. He was troublesome, ignorant, superstitious, a braggart, cowardly, and sometimes like a madman. He would have had me cry, since fear made him weep, and he said over and over again that this imprisonment would ruin his reputation. On this count I reassured him with a sarcasm he did not understand. I told him that his reputation was too well known to suffer anything from this little misfortune, and he took that for a compliment. He would not confess to being a miser, but I made him admit that if the Inquisitors would give him a hundred sequins for every day of his imprisonment he would gladly pass the rest of his life under the Leads.

He was a Talmudist, like all modern Jews, and

he tried to make me believe that he was very devout; but I once extracted a smile of approbation from him by telling him that he would forswear Moses if the Pope would make him a cardinal. As the son of a rabbi he was learned in all the ceremonies of his religion, but like most men he considered the essence of a religion to lie in its discipline and outward forms.

This Jew, who was extremely fat, passed three-quarters of his life in bed; and though he often dozed in the day-time, he was annoyed at not being able to sleep at night—all the more as he saw that I slept excellently. He once took it into his head to wake me up as I was enjoying my sleep.

"What do you want?" said I; "waking me up with a start like this."

"My dear fellow, I can't sleep a wink. Have compassion on me and let us have a little talk."

"You scoundrel! You act thus and you dare to call yourself my friend! I know your lack of sleep torments you, but if you again deprive me of the only blessing I enjoy I will arise and strangle you."

I uttered these words in a kind of transport.

"Forgive me, for mercy's sake! and be sure that I will not trouble you again."

It is possible that I should not have strangled him, but I was very much tempted to do so. A prisoner who is happy enough to sleep soundly, all the while he sleeps is no longer a captive, and feels no

more the weight of his chains. He ought to look upon the wretch who awakens him as a guard who deprives him of his liberty, and makes him feel his misery once more, since, awakening, he feels all his former woes. Furthermore, the sleeping prisoner often dreams that he is free again, in like manner as the wretch dying of hunger sees himself in dreams seated at a sumptuous feast.

I congratulated myself on not having commenced my great work before he came, especially as he required that the room should be swept out. The first time he asked for it to be done, the guards made me laugh by saying that it would kill me. However, he insisted; and I had my revenge by pretending to be ill, but from interested motives I made no further opposition.

On the Wednesday in Holy Week Lawrence told us that the secretary would make us the customary visit in the afternoon, the object being to give peace to them that would receive the sacrament at Easter, and also to know if they had anything to say against the gaoler. "So, gentlemen," said Lawrence, "if you have any complaints to make of me make them. Dress yourselves fully, as is customary." I told Lawrence to get me a confessor for the day.

I put myself into full dress, and the Jew followed my example, taking leave of me in advance, so sure was he that the secretary would set him free on hearing what he had to say. "My presentiment,"

said he, "is of the same kind as I have had before, and I have never been deceived."

"I congratulate you, but don't reckon without your host." He did not understand what I meant.

In course of time the secretary came, and as soon as the cell-door was opened the Jew ran out and threw himself at his feet on both knees. I heard for five minutes nothing but his tears and complaints, for the secretary said not one word. He came back, and Lawrence told me to go out. With a beard of eight months' growth, and a dress made for love-making in August, I must have presented a somewhat curious appearance. Much to my disgust I shivered with cold, and was afraid that the secretary would think I was trembling with fear. As I was obliged to bend low to come out of my hole, my bow was ready made, and drawing myself up, I looked at him calmly without affecting any unseasonable hardihood, and waited for him to speak. The secretary also kept silence, so that we stood facing each other like a pair of statues. At the end of two minutes, the secretary, seeing that I said nothing, gave me a slight bow, and went away. I re-entered my cell, and taking off my clothes in haste, got into bed to get warm again. The Jew was astonished at my not having spoken to the secretary, although my silence had cried more loudly than his cowardly complaints. A prisoner of my kind has no business to open his mouth before his judge, except to answer questions. On Maundy Thursday a

Jesuit came to confess me, and on Holy Saturday a priest of St. Mark's came to administer to me the Holy Communion. My confession appearing rather too laconic to the sweet son of Ignatius he thought good to remonstrate with me before giving me his absolution.

"Do you pray to God?" he said.

"From the morning unto the evening, and from the evening unto the morning, for, placed as I am, all that I feel—my anxiety, my grief, all the wanderings of my mind—can be but a prayer in the eyes of the Divine Wisdom which alone sees my heart."

The Jesuit smiled slightly and replied by a discourse rather metaphysical than moral, which did not at all tally with my views. I should have confuted him on every point if he had not astonished me by a prophecy he made. "Since it is from us," said he, "that you learnt what you know of religion, practise it in our fashion, pray like us, and *know that you will only come out of this place on the day of the saint whose name you bear.*" So saying he gave me absolution, and left me. This man left the strongest possible impression on my mind. I did my best, but I could not rid myself of it. I proceeded to pass in review all the saints in the calendar.

The Jesuit was the director of M. Flaminio Corner, an old senator, and then a State Inquisitor. This statesman was a famous man of letters, a great politician, highly religious, and author of several

pious and ascetic works written in Latin. His reputation was spotless.

On being informed that I should be set free on the feast-day of my patron saint, and thinking that my informant ought to know for certain what he told me, I felt glad to have a patron-saint. "But which is it?" I asked myself. "It cannot be St. James of Compostella, whose name I bear, for it was on the feast-day of that saint that Messer-Grande burst open my door." I took the almanac and looking for the saints' days nearest at hand I found St. George—a saint of some note, but of whom I had never thought. I then devoted myself to St. Mark, whose feast fell on the twenty-fifth of the month, and whose protection as a Venetian I might justly claim. To him, then, I addressed my vows, but all in vain, for his feast came round and still I was in prison. Then I took myself to St. James, the brother of Christ, who comes before St. Philip, but again in the wrong. I tried St. Anthony, who, if the tale told at Padua be true, worked thirteen miracles a day. He worked none for me. Thus I passed from one to the other, and by degrees I got to hope in the protection of the saints just as one hopes for anything one desires, but does not expect to come to pass; and I finished up by hoping only in my *Saint Bar,* and in the strength of my arms. Nevertheless the promise of the Jesuit came to pass, since I escaped from The Leads on All Hallows Day; and it is certain that if I had a patron-

saint, he must be looked for in their number since they are all honoured on that day.

A fortnight after Easter I was delivered from my troublesome Israelite, and the poor devil instead of being sent back to his home had to spend two years in The Fours, and on his gaining his freedom he went and set up in Trieste, where he ended his days.

No sooner was I again alone than I set zealously about my work. I had to make haste for fear of some new visitor, who, like the Jew, might insist on the cell being swept. I began by drawing back my bed, and after lighting my lamp I lay down on my belly, my pike in my hand, with a napkin close by in which to gather the fragments of board as I scooped them out. My task was to destroy the board by dint of driving into it the point of my tool. At first the pieces I got away were not much larger than grains of wheat, but they soon increased in size.

The board was made of deal, and was sixteen inches broad. I began to pierce it at its juncture with another board, and as there were no nails or clamps my work was simple. After six hours' toil I tied up the napkin, and put it on one side to empty it the following day behind the pile of papers in the garret. The fragments were four or five times larger in bulk than the hole from whence they came. I put back my bed in its place, and on emptying the napkin the next morning I took care so to dispose the fragments that they should not be seen.

Having broken through the first board, which I found to be two inches thick, I was stopped by a second which I judged to be as thick as the first. Tormented by the fear of new visitors I redoubled my efforts, and in three weeks I had pierced the three boards of which the floor was composed; and then I thought that all was lost, for I found I had to pierce a bed of small pieces of marble known at Venice as *terrazzo marmorin.* This forms the usual floor of Venetian houses of all kinds, except the cottages, for even the high nobility prefer the *terrazzo* to the finest boarded floor. I was thunderstruck to find that my bar made no impression on this composition; but, nevertheless, I was not altogether discouraged and cast down. I remembered Hannibal, who, according to Livy, opened up a passage through the Alps by breaking the rocks with axes and other instruments, having previously softened them with vinegar. I thought that Hannibal had succeeded not by *aceto,* but *aceta,* which in the Latin of Padua might well be the same as *ascia;* and who can guarantee the text to be free from the blunders of the copyist? All the same, I poured into the hole a bottle of strong vinegar I had by me, and in the morning, either because of the vinegar or because I, refreshed and rested, put more strength and patience into the work, I saw that I should overcome this new difficulty; for I had not to break the pieces of marble, but only to pulverize with the end of my bar the cement which kept them together. I soon perceived

that the greatest difficulty was on the surface, and in four days the whole masaic was destroyed without the point of my pike being at all damaged.

Below the pavement I found another plank, but I had expected as much. I concluded that this would be the last; that is the first to be put down when the rooms below were being ceiled. I pierced it with some difficulty, as, the hole being ten inches deep, it had become troublesome to work the pike. A thousand times I commended myself to the mercy of God. Those Free-thinkers who say that praying is no good do not know what they are talking about; for I know by experience that, having prayed to God, I always felt myself grow stronger, which fact amply proves the usefulness of prayer, whether the renewal of strength come straight from God, or whether it comes only from the trust one has in Him.

On the 25th of June, on which day the Republic celebrates the wonderful appearance of St. Mark under the form of a winged lion in the ducal church, about three o'clock in the afternoon, as I was labouring on my belly at the hole, stark naked, covered with sweat, my lamp beside me, I heard with mortal fear the shriek of a bolt and the noise of the door of the first passage. It was a fearful moment! I blew out my lamp, and leaving my bar in the hole I threw into it the napkin with the shavings it contained, and as swift as lightning I replaced my bed as best I could, and threw myself on it just as the door of my cell opened. If Lawrence had come in

two seconds sooner he would have caught me. He was about to walk over me, but crying out dolefully I stopped him, and he fell back, saying,—

"Truly, sir, I pity you, for the air here is as hot as a furnace. Get up, and thank God for giving you such good company."

"Come in, my lord, come in," said he to the poor wretch who followed him. Then, without heeding my nakedness, the fellow made the noble gentleman enter, and he seeing me to be naked, sought to avoid me while I vainly tried to find my shirt.

The new-comer thought he was in hell, and cried out, "Where am I? My God! where have I been put? What heat! What a stench! With whom am I?"

Lawrence made him go out, and asked me to put on my shirt and to go into the garret for a moment. Addressing himself to the new prisoner, he said that, having to get a bed and other necessaries, he would leave us in the garret till he came back, and that, in the mean time, the cell would be freed from the bad smell, which was only oil. What a start it gave me as I heard him utter the word "oil." In my hurry I had forgotten to snuff the wick after blowing it out. As Lawrence asked me no questions about it, I concluded that he knew all, and the accursed Jew must have betrayed me. I thought myself lucky that he was not able to tell him any more.

From that time the repulsion which I had felt for Lawrence disappeared.

After putting on my shirt and dressing-gown,

I went out and found my new companion engaged in writing a list of what he wanted the gaoler to get him. As soon as he saw me, he exclaimed, "Ah! it's Casanova." I, too, recognised him as the Abbé and Count Fenarolo, a man of fifty, amiable, rich, and a favourite in society. He embraced me, and when I told him that I should have expected to see anybody in that place rather than him, he could not keep back his tears, which made me weep also.

When we were alone I told him that, as soon as his bed came, I should offer him the recess, begging him at the same time not to accept it. I asked him, also, not to ask to have the cell swept, saying that I would tell him the reason another time. He promised to keep all secrecy in the matter, and said he thought himself fortunate to be placed with me. He said that as no one knew why I was imprisoned, everyone was guessing at it. Some said that I was the heresiarch of a new sect; others that Madame Memmo had persuaded the Inquisitors that I had made her sons Atheists, and others that Antony Condulmer, the State Inquisitor, had me imprisoned as a disturber of the peace, because I hissed Abbé Chiari's plays, and had formed a design to go to Padua for the express purpose of killing him.

All these accusations had a certain foundation in fact which gave them an air of truth, but in reality they were all wholly false. I cared too little for religion to trouble myself to found a new one. The sons of Madame Memmo were full of wit, and more

likely to seduce than to be seduced; and Master Condulmer would have had too much on his hands if he had imprisoned all those who hissed the Abbé Chiari; and as for this abbé, once a Jesuit, I had forgiven him, as the famous Father Origo, himself formerly a Jesuit, had taught me to take my revenge by praising him everywhere, which incited the malicious to vent their satire on the abbé; and thus I was avenged without any trouble to myself.

In the evening they brought a good bed, fine linen, perfumes, an excellent supper, and choice wines. The abbé ate nothing, but I supped for two. When Lawrence had wished us good night and had shut us up till the next day, I got out my lamp, which I found to be empty, the napkin having sucked up all the oil. This made me laugh, for as the napkin might very well have caught and set the room on fire, the idea of the confusion which would have ensued excited my hilarity. I imparted the cause of my mirth to my companion, who laughed himself, and then, lighting the lamp, we spent the night in pleasant talk. The history of his imprisonment was as follows:

"Yesterday, at three o'clock in the afternoon, Madame Alessandria, Count Martinengo, and myself, got into a gondola. We went to Padua to see the opera, intending to return to Venice afterwards. In the second act my evil genius led me to the gaming-table, where I unfortunately saw Count Rosenberg, the Austrian ambassador, without his mask, and

about ten paces from him was Madame Ruzzini, whose husband is going to Vienna to represent the Republic. I greeted them both, and was just going away, when the ambassador called out to me, so as to be heard by everyone, 'You are very fortunate in being able to pay your court to so sweet a lady. At present the personage I represent makes the fairest land in the world no better for me than a galley. Tell the lady, I beseech you, that the laws which now prevent me speaking to her will be without force at Venice, where I shall go next year, and then I shall declare war against her.' Madame Ruzzini, who saw that she was being spoken of, asked me what the count had said, and I told her, word for word. 'Tell him,' said she, 'that I accept his declaration of war, and that we shall see who will wage it best.' I did not think I had committed a crime in reporting her reply, which was after all a mere compliment. After the opera we set out, and got here at midnight. I was going to sleep when a messenger brought me a note ordering me to go to the Bussola at one o'clock, Signor Bussinello, Secretary of the Council of Ten, having something to say to me. Astonished at such an order—always of bad omen, and vexed at being obliged to obey, I went at the time appointed, and my lord secretary, without giving me a word, ordered me to be taken here."

Certainly no fault could be less criminal than that which Count Fenarolo had committed, but one can break certain laws in all innocence without being

any the less punishable. I congratulated him on knowing what his crime had been, and told him that he would be set free in a week, and would be requested to spend six months in the Bressian. "I can't think," said he, "that they will leave me here for a week." I determined to keep him good company, and to soften the bitterness of his imprisonment, and so well did I sympathize with his position that I forgot all about my own.

The next morning at day-break, Lawrence brought coffee and a basket filled with all the requisites for a good dinner. The abbé was astonished, for he could not conceive how anyone could eat at such an early hour. They let us walk for an hour in the garret and then shut us up again, and we saw no more of them throughout the day. The fleas which tormented us made the abbé ask why I did not have the cell swept out. I could not let him think that dirt and untidiness was agreeable to me, or that my skin was any harder than his own, so I told him the whole story, and shewed him what I had done. He was vexed at having as it were forced me to make him my confident, but he encouraged me to go on, and if possible to finish what I was about that day, as he said he would help me to descend and then would draw up the rope, not wishing to complicate his own difficulties by an escape. I shewed him the model of a contrivance by means of which I could certainly get possession of the sheets which were to be my rope; it was a short stick attached by one end to a long

piece of thread. By this stick I intended to attach my rope to the bed, and as the thread hung down to the floor of the room below, as soon as I got there I should pull the thread and the rope would fall down. He tried it, and congratulated me on my invention, as this was a necessary part of my scheme, as otherwise the rope hanging down would have immediately discovered me. My noble companion was convinced that I ought to stop my work, for I might be surprised, having to do several days' work before finishing the hole which would cost Lawrence his life. Should the thought of gaining my liberty at the expense of a fellow-creature have made me desist? I should have still persisted if my escape had meant death to the whole body of Venetian guards, and even to the Inquisitors themselves. Can the love of country, all holy though it be, prevail in the heart of the man whose country is oppressing him?

My good humour did not prevent my companion having some bad quarters of an hour. He was in love with Madame Alessandria, who had been a singer, and was either the mistress or the wife of his friend Martinengo; and he should have deemed himself happy, but the happier a lover is, so much the more his unhappiness when he is snatched from the beloved object. He sighed, wept, and declared that he loved a woman in whom all the noble virtues were contained. I compassionated him, and took care not to comfort him by saying that love is a mere trifle—a cold piece of comfort given to lovers by

fools, and, moreover, it is not true that love is a mere trifle.

The week I had mentioned as the probable term of his imprisonment passed quickly enough, and I lost my friend, but did not waste my time by mourning for him; he was set free, and I was content. I did not beg him to be discreet, for the least doubt on that score would have wounded his noble spirit. During the week he was with me he only ate soup and fruit, taking a little Canary wine. It was I who made good cheer in his stead and greatly to his delight. Before he left we swore eternal friendship.

The next day Lawrence gave me an account of my money, and on finding that I had a balance of four sequins I gave them to him, telling him it was a present from me to his wife. I did not tell him that it was for the rent of my lamp, but he was free to think so if he chose.

Again betaking myself to my work, and toiling without cessation, on the 23rd of August I saw it finished. This delay was caused by an inevitable accident. As I was hollowing out the last plank, I put my eye to a little hole, through which I ought to have seen the hall of the Inquisitors—in fact, I did see it, but I saw also at one side of the hole a surface about eight inches thick. It was, as I had feared all the time it would be, one of the beams which kept up the ceiling. I was thus compelled to enlarge my hole on the other side, for the beam would have made

it so narrow that a man of my size could never have got through. I increased the hole, therefore, by a fourth, working between fear and hope, for it was possible that the space between two of the beams would not be large enough. After I had finished, a second little hole assured me that God had blessed my labour. I then carefully stopped up the two small holes to prevent anything falling down into the hall, and also lest a ray from my lamp should be perceived, for this would have discovered all and ruined me.

I fixed my escape for the eve of St. Augustine's Day, because I knew that the Grand Council assembled on that feast, and there would consequently be nobody near the room through which I must pass in getting away. This would have been on the twenty-seventh of the month, but a misfortune happened to me on the twenty-fifth which makes me still shudder when I think of it, notwithstanding the years which have passed since then.

Precisely at noon I heard the noise of bolts, and I thought I should die; for a violent beating of the heart made me imagine my last hour was come. I fell into my easy chair, and waited. Lawrence came into the garret and put his head at the grating, and said, "I give you joy, sir, for the good news I am bringing you." At first, not being able to think of any other news which could be good to me, I fancied I had been set at liberty, and I trembled, for

I knew that the discovery of the hole I had made would have caused my pardon to be recalled.

Lawrence came in and told me to follow him.

"Wait till I put on my clothes."

"It's of no consequence, as you only have to walk from this abominable cell to another, well lighted and quite fresh, with two windows whence you can see half Venice, and you can stand upright too." . . . I could bear no more, I felt that I was fainting.

"Give me the vinegar," said I, "and go and tell the secretary that I thank the Court for this favour, and entreat it to leave me where I am."

"You make me laugh, sir. Have you gone mad? They would take you from hell to put you in heaven, and you would refuse to stir? Come, come, the Court must be obeyed, pray rise, sir. I will give you my arm, and will have your clothes and your books brought for you."

Seeing that resistance was of no avail, I got up, and was much comforted at hearing him give orders for my arm-chair to be brought, for my pike was to follow me, and with it hope. I should have much liked to have been able to take the hole—the object of so much wasted trouble and hope—with me. I may say with truth that, as I came forth from that horrible and doleful place, my spirit remained there.

Leaning on Lawrence's shoulder, while he, thinking to cheer me up, cracked his foolish jokes,

I passed through two narrow passages, and going down three steps I found myself in a well-lighted hall, at the end of which, on the left-hand side, was a door leading into another passage two feet broad by about twelve long, and in the corner was my new cell. It had a barred window which was opposite to two windows, also barred, which lighted the passage, and thus one had a fine view as far as Lido. At that trying moment I did not care much for the view; but later on I found that a sweet and pleasant wind came through the window when it was opened, and tempered the insufferable heat; and this was a true blessing for the poor wretch who had to breathe the sultry prison air, especially in the hot season.

As soon as I got into my new cell Lawrence had my arm-chair brought in, and went away, saying that he would have the remainder of my effects brought to me. I sat on my arm-chair as motionless as a statue, waiting for the storm, but not fearing it. What overwhelmed me was the distressing idea that all my pains and contrivances were of no use, nevertheless I felt neither sorry nor repentant for what I had done, and I made myself abstain from thinking of what was going to happen, and thus kept myself calm.

Lifting up my soul to God I could not help thinking that this misfortune was a Divine punishment for neglecting to escape when all was ready. Nevertheless, though I could have escaped three days

sooner, I thought my punishment too severe, all the more as I had put off my escape from motives of prudence, which seemed to me worthy of reward, for if I had only consulted my own impatience to be gone I should have risked everything. To controvert the reasons which made me postpone my flight to the 27th of August, a special revelation would have been requisite; and though I had read "Mary of Agrada" I was not mad enough for that.

CHAPTER XI

THE SUBTERRANEAN PRISONS KNOWN AS THE WELLS —LAWRENCE'S VENGEANCE—I ENTER INTO A CORRESPONDENCE WITH ANOTHER PRISONER, FATHER BALBI: HIS CHARACTER—I PLAN WITH HIM A MEANS OF ESCAPE—HOW I CONTRIVED TO LET HIM HAVE MY PIKE—I AM GIVEN A SCOUNDRELLY COMPANION: HIS PORTRAIT

I was thus anxious and despairing when two of the guards brought me my bed. They went back to fetch the rest of my belongings, and for two hours I saw no one, although the door of my cell remained open. This unnatural delay engendered many thoughts, but I could not fix exactly on the reason of it. I only knew that I had everything to fear, and this knowledge made me brace up my mind so that I should be able to meet calmly all possible misfortunes.

Besides The Leads and The Fours the State Inquisitors also possess certain horrible subterranean cells beneath the ducal palace, where are sent men whom they do not wish to put to death, though they be thought worthy of it.

These subterranean prisons are precisely like tombs, but they call them "wells," because they always contain two feet of water, which penetrates from the sea by the same grating by which light is given, this grating being only a square foot in size. If the unfortunates condemned to live in these sewers do not wish to take a bath of filthy water, they have to remain all day seated on a trestle, which serves them both for bed and cupboard. In the morning they are given a pitcher of water, some thin soup, and a ration of army bread which they have to eat immediately, or it becomes the prey of the enormous water rats who swarm in those dreadful abodes. Usually the wretches condemned to The Wells are imprisoned there for life, and there have been prisoners who have attained a great age. A villain who died whilst I was under the Leads had passed thirty-seven years in The Wells, and he was forty-four when sentenced. Knowing that he deserved death, it is possible that he took his imprisonment as a favour, for there are men who fear nought save death. His name was Béguelin. A Frenchman by birth, he had served in the Venetian army during the last war against the Turks in 1716, under the command of Field-Marshal the Count of Schulenbourg, who made the Grand Vizier raise the siege of Corfu. This Béguelin was the marshal's spy. He disguised himself as a Turk, and penetrated into the Mussulman quarters, but at the same time he was also in the service of the Grand

Vizier, and being detected in this course he certainly had reason to be thankful for being allowed to die in The Wells. The rest of his life must have been divided between weariness and hunger, but no doubt he often said, *Dum vita superest, bene est.*

I have seen at Spiegelberg, in Moravia, prisons fearful in another way. There mercy sends the prisoners under sentence of death, and not one of them ever survives a year of imprisonment. What mercy!

During the two mortal hours of suspense, full of sombre thoughts and the most melancholy ideas, I could not help fancying that I was going to be plunged in one of these horrible dens, where the wretched inhabitants feed on idle hopes or become the prey of panic fears. The Tribunal might well send him to hell who had endeavoured to escape from purgatory.

At last I heard hurried steps, and I soon saw Lawrence standing before me, transformed with rage, foaming at the mouth, and blaspheming God and His saints. He began by ordering me to give him the hatchet and the tools I had used to pierce the floor, and to tell him from which of the guards I had got the tools. Without moving, and quite calmly, I told him that I did not know what he was talking about. At this reply he gave orders that I should be searched, but rising with a determined air I shook my fist at the knaves, and having taken

off my clothes I said to them, "Do your duty, but let no one touch me."

They searched my mattress, turned my bed inside out, felt the cushions of my arm-chair, and found—nothing.

"You won't tell me, then, where are the instruments with which you made the hole. It's of no matter, as we shall find a way to make you speak.

"If it be true that I have made a hole at all, I shall say that you gave me the tools, and that I have returned them to you."

At this threat, which made his followers smile with glee, probably because he had been abusing them, he stamped his feet, tore his hair, and went out like one possessed. The guards returned and brought me all my properties, the whetstone and lamp excepted. After locking up my cell he shut the two windows which gave me a little air. I thus found myself confined in a narrow space without the possibility of receiving the least breath of air from any quarter. Nevertheless, my situation did not disturb me to any great extent, as I must confess I thought I had got off cheaply. In spite of his training, Lawrence had not thought of turning the arm-chair over; and thus, finding myself still possessor of the iron bar, I thanked Providence, and thought myself still at liberty to regard the bar as means by which, sooner or later, I should make my escape.

I passed a sleepless night, as much from the

heat as the change in my prospects. At day-break Lawrence came and brought some insufferable wine, and some water I should not have cared to drink. All the rest was of a piece; dry salad, putrid meat, and bread harder than English biscuit. He cleaned nothing, and when I asked him to open the windows he seemed not to hear me; but a guard armed with an iron bar began to sound all over my room, against the wall, on the floor, and above all under my bed. I looked on with an unmoved expression, but it did not escape my notice that the guard did not sound the ceiling. "That way," said I to myself, will lead me out of this place of torments." But for any such project to succeed I should have to depend purely on chance, for all my operations would leave visible traces. The cell was quite new, and the least scratch would have attracted the notice of my keepers.

I passed a terrible day, for the heat was like that of a furnace, and I was quite unable to make any use of the food with which I had been provided. The perspiration and the lack of nourishment made me so weak that I could neither walk nor read. Next day my dinner was the same; the horrible smell of the veal the rascal brought me made me draw back from it instantly. "Have you received orders," said I, "to kill me with hunger and heat?" He locked the door, and went out without a word. On the third day I was treated in the same manner. I asked for a pencil and paper to write to the secretary. Still no answer.

In despair, I eat my soup, and then soaking my bread in a little Cyprus wine I resolved to get strength to avenge myself on Lawrence by plunging my pike into his throat. My rage told me that I had no other course, but I grew calmer in the night, and in the morning, when the scoundrel appeared, I contented myself with saying that I would kill him as soon as I was at liberty. He only laughed at my threat, and again went out without opening his lips.

I began to think that he was acting under orders from the secretary, to whom he must have told all. I knew not what to do. I strove between patience and despair, and felt as if I were dying for want of food. At last on the eighth day, with rage in my heart and in a voice of thunder, I bade him, under the name of "hangman," and in the presence of the archers, give me an account of my money. He answered drily that I should have it the next day. Then as he was about to go I took my bucket, and made as if I would go and empty it in the passage. Foreseeing my design, he told a guard to take it, and during the disgusting operation opened a window, which he shut as soon as the affair was done, so that in spite of my remonstrances I was left in the plague-stricken atmosphere. I determined to speak to him still worse the next day; but as soon as he appeared my anger cooled, for before giving me the account of my money he presented me with a basket of lemons which M. de Bragadin had sent

me, also a large bottle of water, which seemed drinkable, and a nice roasted fowl; and, besides this, one of the guards opened the two windows. When he gave me the account I only looked at the sum total, and I told him to give the balance to his wife with the exception of a sequin, which I told him to give the guards who were with him. I thus made friends with these fellows, who thanked me heartily.

Lawrence, who remained alone with me on purpose, spoke as follows:

"You have already told me, sir, that I myself furnished you with the tools to make that enormous hole, and I will ask no more about it; but would you kindly tell me where you got the materials to make a lamp "

"From you."

"Well, for the moment, sir, I'm dashed, for I did not think that wit meant impudence."

"I am not telling you any lies. You it was who with your own hands gave me all the requisites—oil, flint, and matches; the rest I had by me."

"You are right; but can you shew me as simply that I gave you the tools to make that hole?"

"Certainly, for you are the only person who has given me anything."

"Lord have mercy upon me! what do I hear? Tell me, then, how I gave you a hatchet?"

"I will tell you the whole story and I will speak the truth, but only in the presence of the secretary."

"I don't wish to know any more, and I believe

everything you say. I only ask you to say nothing about it, as I am a poor man with a family to provide for." He went out with his head between his hands.

I congratulated myself heartily on having found a way to make the rascal afraid of me; he thought that I knew enough to hang him. I saw that his own interest would keep him from saying anything to his superiors about the matter.

I had told Lawrence to bring me the works of Maffei, but the expense displeased him though he did not dare to say so. He asked me what I could want with books with so many to my hand.

"I have read them all," I said, "and want some fresh ones."

"I will get someone who is here to lend you his books, if you will lend yours in return; thus you will save your money."

"Perhaps the books are romances, for which I do not care."

"They are scientific works; and if you think yours is the only long head here, you are very much mistaken."

"Very good, we shall see. I will lend this book to the 'long head,' and do you bring me one from him."

I had given him Petau's *Rationarium,* and in four minutes he brought me the first volume of Wolff's works. Well pleased with it I told him, much to his delight, that I would do without Maffei.

Less pleased with the learned reading than at the opportunity to begin a correspondence with someone who might help me in my plan of escape (which I had already sketched out in my head), I opened the book as soon as Lawrence was gone, and was overjoyed to find on one of the leaves the maxim of Seneca, *Calamitosus est animus futuri anxius,* paraphrased in six elegant verses. I made another six on the spot, and this is the way in which I contrived to write them. I had let the nail of my little finger grow long to serve as an ear-pick; I cut it to a point, and made a pen of it. I had no ink, and I was going to prick myself and write in my blood, when I bethought me that the juice of some mulberries I had by me would be an excellent substitute for ink. Besides the six verses I wrote out a list of my books, and put it in the back of the same book. It must be understood that Italian books are generally bound in parchment, and in such a way that when the book is opened the back becomes a kind of pocket. On the title page I wrote, *latet.* I was anxious to get an answer, so the next day I told Lawrence that I had read the book and wanted another; and in a few minutes the second volume was in my hands.

As soon as I was alone I opened the book, and found a loose leaf with the following communication in Latin:

"Both of us are in the same prison, and to both of us it must be pleasant to find how the ignorance

of our gaoler procures us a privilege before unknown to such a place. I, Marin Balbi, who write to you, am a Venetian of high birth, and a regular cleric, and my companion is Count André Asquin, of Udine, the capital of Friuli. He begs me to inform you that all the books in his possession, of which you will find a list at the back of this volume, are at your service; but we warn you that we must use all possible care to prevent our correspondence being discovered by Lawrence."

In our position there was nothing wonderful in our both pitching on the idea of sending each other the catalogues of our small libraries, or in our choosing the same hiding-place—the back of the books; all this was plain common sense; but the advice to be careful contained on the loose leaf struck me with some astonishment. It seemed next to impossible that Lawrence should leave the book unopened, but if he had opened it he would have seen the leaf, and not knowing how to read he would have kept it in his pocket till he could get someone to tell him the contents, and thus all would have been strangled at its birth. This made me think that my correspondent was an arrant block-head.

After reading through the list, I wrote who I was, how I had been arrested, my ignorance as to what crime I had committed, and my hope of soon becoming free. Balbi then wrote me a letter of sixteen pages, in which he gave me the history of all his misfortunes. He had been four years in

prison, and the reason was that he had enjoyed the good graces of three girls, of whom he had three children, all of whom he baptized under his own name.

The first time his superior had let him off with an admonition, the second time he was threatened with punishment, and on the third and last occasion he was imprisoned. The father-superior of his convent brought him his dinner every day. He told me in his letter that both the superior and the Tribunal were tyrants, since they had no lawful authority over his conscience: that being sure that the three children were his, he thought himself constrained as a man of honour not to deprive them of the advantage of bearing his name. He finished by telling me that he had found himself obliged to recognize his children to prevent slander attributing them to others, which would have injured the reputation of the three honest girls who bore them; and besides he could not stifle the voice of nature, which spoke so well on behalf of these little ones. His last words were, "There is no danger of the superior falling into the same fault, as he confines his attention to the boys."

This letter made me know my man. Eccentric, sensual, a bad logician, vicious, a fool, indiscreet, and ungrateful, all this appeared in his letter, for after telling me that he should be badly off without Count Asquin who was seventy years old, and had books and money, he devoted two pages to abus-

ing him, telling me of his faults and follies. In society I should have had nothing more to do with a man of his character, but under the Leads I was obliged to put everything to some use. I found in the back of the book a pencil, pens, and paper, and I was thus enabled to write at my ease.

He told me also the history of the prisoners who were under the Leads, and of those who had been there since his imprisonment. He said that the guard who secretly brought him whatever he wanted was called Nicolas, he also told me the names of the prisoners, and what he knew about them, and to convince me he gave me the history of the hole I had made. It seems I had been taken from my cell to make room for the patrician Priuli, and that Lawrence had taken two hours to repair the damage I had done, and that he had imparted the secret to the carpenter, the blacksmith, and all the guards under pain of death if they revealed it. "In another day," the guard had said, "Casanova would have escaped, and Lawrence would have swung, for though he pretended great astonishment when he saw the hole, there can be no doubt that he and no other provided the tools." "Nicolas has told me," added my correspondent, "that M. de Bragadin has promised him a thousand sequins if he will aid you to make your escape, but that Lawrence, who knows of it, hopes to get the money without risking his neck, his plan being to obtain your liberty by means of the influence of his wife with

M. Diedo. None of the guards dare to speak of what happened for fear Lawrence might get himself out of the difficulty, and take his revenge by having them dismissed." He begged me to tell him all the details, and how I got the tools, and to count upon his keeping the secret.

I had no doubts as to his curiosity, but many as to his discretion, and this very request shewed him to be the most indiscreet of men. Nevertheless, I concluded that I must make use of him, for he seemed to me the kind of man to assist me in my escape. I began to write an answer to him, but a sudden suspicion made me keep back what I had written. I fancied that the correspondence might be a mere artifice of Lawrence's to find out who had given me the tools, and what I had done with them. To satisfy him without compromising myself I told him that I had made the hole with a strong knife in my possession, which I had placed on the window-ledge in the passage. In less than three days this false confidence of mine made me feel secure, as Lawrence did not go to the window, as he would certainly have done if the letter had been intercepted. Furthermore, Father Balbi told me that he could understand how I might have a knife, as Lawrence had told him that I had not been searched previous to my imprisonment. Lawrence himself had received no orders to search me, and this circumstance might have stood him in good stead if I had succeeded in escaping, as all prisoners handed over to him by the

captain of the guard were supposed to have been searched already. On the other hand, Messer-Grande might have said that, having seen me get out of my bed, he was sure that I had no weapons about me, and thus both of them would have got out of trouble. The monk ended by begging me to send him my knife by Nicolas, on whom I might rely.

The monk's thoughtlessness seemed to me almost incredible. I wrote and told him that I was not at all inclined to put my trust in Nicolas, and that my secret was one not to be imparted in writing. However, I was amused by his letters. In one of them he told me why Count Asquin was kept under the Leads, in spite of his helplessness, for he was enormously fat, and as he had a broken leg which had been badly set he could hardly put one foot before another. It seems that the count, not being a very wealthy man, followed the profession of a barrister at Udine, and in that capacity defended the countryfolk against the nobility, who wished to deprive the peasants of their vote in the assembly of the province. The claims of the farmers disturbed the public peace, and by way of bringing them to reason the nobles had recourse to the State Inquisitors, who ordered the count-barrister to abandon his clients. The count replied that the municipal law authorized him to defend the constitution, and would not give in; whereon the Inquisitors arrested him, law or no law, and for the last five years he had breathed the invigorating air of The Leads. Like myself he had

fifty sous a day, but he could do what he liked with the money. The monk, who was always penniless, told me a good deal to the disadvantage of the count, whom he represented as very miserly. He informed me that in the cell on the other side of the hall there were two gentlemen of the "Seven Townships," who were likewise imprisoned for disobedience, but one of them had become mad, and was in chains; in another cell, he said, there were two lawyers.

My suspicions quieted, I reasoned as follows:

I wish to regain my liberty at all hazards. My pike is an admirable instrument, but I can make no use of it as my cell is sounded all over (except the ceiling) every day. If I would escape, it is by the ceiling, therefore, that way I must go, but to do that I must make a hole through it, and that I cannot do from my side, for it would not be the work of a day. I must have someone to help me; and not having much choice I had to pick out the monk. He was thirty-eight, and though not rich in common sense I judged that the love of liberty—the first need of man—would give him sufficient courage to carry out any orders I might give. I must begin by telling him my plan in its entirety, and then I shall have to find a way to give him the bar. I had, then, two difficult problems before me.

My first step was to ask him if he wished to be free, and if he were disposed to hazard all in attempting his escape in my company. He replied that

his mate and he would do anything to break their chains, but, added he, "it is of no use to break one's head against a stone wall." He filled four pages with the impossibilities which presented themselves to his feeble intellect, for the fellow saw no chance of success on any quarter. I replied that I did not trouble myself with general difficulties, and that in forming my plan I had only thought of special difficulties, which I would find means to overcome, and I finished by giving him my word of honour to set him free, if he would promise to carry out exactly whatever orders I might give.

He gave me his promise to do so. I told him that I had a pike twenty inches long, and with this tool he must pierce the ceiling of his cell next the wall which separated us, and he would then be above my head; his next step would be to make a hole in the ceiling of my cell and aid me to escape by it. "Here your task will end and mine will begin, and I will undertake to set both you and Count Asquin at liberty."

He answered that when I had got out of my cell I should be still in prison, and our position would be the same as now, as we should only be in the garrets which were secured by three strong doors.

"I know that, reverend father," I replied, "but we are not going to escape by the doors. My plan is complete, and I will guarantee its success. All I ask of you is to carry out my directions, and to make no difficulties. Do you busy yourself to find out some

way of getting my bar without the knowledge of the gaoler. In the meanwhile, make him get you about forty pictures of saints, large enough to cover all the walls of your cell. Lawrence will suspect nothing, and they will do to conceal the opening you are to make in the ceiling. To do this will be the work of some days, and of mornings Lawrence will not see what you have done the day before, as you will have covered it up with one of the pictures. If you ask me why I do not undertake the work myself, I can only say that the gaoler suspects me, and the objection will doubtless seem to you a weighty one."

Although I had told him to think of a plan to get hold of the pike, I thought of nothing else myself, and had a happy thought which I hastened to put into execution. I told Lawrence to buy me a folio Bible, which had been published recently; it was the Vulgate with the Septuagint. I hoped to be able to put the pike in the back of the binding of this large volume, and thus to convey it to the monk, but when I saw the book I found the tool to be two inches longer.

My correspondent had written to tell me that his cell was covered with pictures, and I had communicated to him my idea about the Bible and the difficulty presented by its want of length. Happy at being able to display his genius, he rallied me on the poverty of my imagination, telling me that I had only to send him the pike wrapped up in my fox-skin cloak.

"Lawrence," said he, "has often talked about your cloak, and Count Asquin would arouse no suspicion by asking to see it in order to buy one of the same kind. All you have to do is to send it folded up. Lawrence would never dream of unfolding it."

I, on the other hand, was sure that he would. In the first place, because a cloak folded up is more troublesome to carry than when it is unfolded. However, not to rebuff him and at the same time to shew him that I was the wiser, I wrote that he had only to send for the cloak. The next day Lawrence asked me for it, and I gave it folded up, but without the bar, and in a quarter of an hour he brought it back to me, saying that the gentleman had admired it very much.

The monk wrote me a doleful letter, in which he confessed he had given me a piece of bad advice, adding that I was wrong to follow it. According to him the pike was lost, as Lawrence had brought in the cloak all unfolded. After this, all hope was gone. I undeceived him, and begged him for the future to be a little more sparing of his advice. It was necessary to bring the matter to a head, and I determined to send him the bar under cover of my Bible, taking measures to prevent the gaoler from seeing the ends of the great volume. My scheme was as follows:

I told Lawrence that I wanted to celebrate St. Michael's Day with a macaroni cheese; but wishing to shew my gratitude to the person who had kindly

lent me his books, I should like to make him a large dish of it, and to prepare it with my own hands. Lawrence told me (as had been arranged between the monk and myself) that the gentleman in question wished to read the large book which cost three sequins.

"Very good," said I, "I will send it him with the macaroni; but get me the largest dish you have, as I wish to do the thing on a grand scale."

He promised to do what I asked him. I wrapped up the pike in paper and put it in the back of the Bible, taking care that it projected an equal distance at each end. Now, if I placed on the Bible a great dish of macaroni full of melted butter I was quite sure that Lawrence would not examine the ends. All his gaze would be concentrated upon the plate, to avoid spilling the grease on the book. I told Father Balbi of my plan, charging him to take care how he took the dish, and above all to take dish and Bible together, and not one by one.

On the day appointed Lawrence came earlier than usual, carrying a saucepan full of boiling macaroni, and all the necessary ingredients for seasoning the dish. I melted a quantity of butter, and after putting the macaroni into the dish I poured the butter over it till it was full to the brim. The dish was a huge one, and was much larger than the book on which I placed it. I did all this at the door of my cell, Lawrence being outside.

When all was ready I carefully took up the Bible

and dish, placing the back of the book next to the bearer, and told Lawrence to stretch out his arms and take it, to be careful not to spill the grease over the book, and to carry the whole to its destination immediateley. As I gave him this weighty load I kept my eyes fixed on his, and I saw to my joy that he did not take his gaze off the butter, which he was afraid of spilling. He said it would be better to take the dish first, and then to come back for the book; but I told him that this would spoil the present, and that both must go together. He then complained that I had put in too much butter, and said, jokingly, that if it were spilt he would not be responsible for the loss.

As soon as I saw the Bible in the lout's arms I was certain of success, as he could not see the ends of the pike without twisting his head, and I saw no reason why he should divert his gaze from the plate, which he had enough to do to carry evenly. I followed him with my eyes till he disappeared into the ante-chamber of the monk's cell, and he, blowing his nose, three times gave me the pre-arranged signal that all was right, which was confirmed by the appearance of Lawrence in a few moments afterwards.

Father Balbi lost no time in setting about the work, and in eight days he succeeded in making a large enough opening in the ceiling, which he covered with a picture pasted to the ceiling with bread-crumbs. On the 8th of October he wrote to say

that he had passed the whole night in working at the partition wall, and had only succeeded in loosening one brick. He told me the difficulty of separating the bricks joined to one another by a strong cement was enormous, but he promised to persevere, "though," he said, "we shall only make our position worse than it is now." I told him that I was certain of success; that he must believe in me and persevere.

Alas! I was certain of nothing, but I had to speak thus or to give up all. I was fain to escape from this hell on earth, where I was imprisoned by a most detestable tyranny, and I thought only of forwarding this end, with the resolve to succeed, or at all events not to stop before I came to a difficulty which was insurmountable. I had read in the great book of experience that in important schemes action is the grand requisite, and that the rest must be left to fortune. If I had entrusted Father Balbi with these deep mysteries of moral philosophy he would have pronounced me a madman.

His work was only toilsome on the first night, for the more he worked the easier it became, and when he had finished he found he had taken out thirty-six bricks.

On the 16th of October, as I was engaged in translating an ode of Horace, I heard a trampling noise above my head, and then three light blows were struck. This was the signal agreed upon to assure us that our calculations were correct. He worked till the evening, and the next day he wrote that if

the roof of my cell was only two boards thick his work would be finished that day. He assured me that he was carefully making the hole round as I had charged him, and that he would not pierce the ceiling. This was a vital point, as the slightest mark would have led to discovery. "The final touch," he said, "will only take a quarter of an hour." I had fixed on the day after the next to escape from my cell at night-time to enter no more, for with a mate I was quite sure that I could make in two or three hours a hole in the roof of the ducal palace, and once on the outside of the roof I would trust to chance for the means of getting to the ground.

I had not yet got so far as this, for my bad luck had more than one obstacle in store for me. On the same day (it was a Monday) at two o'clock in the afternoon, whilst Father Balbi was at work, I heard the door of the hall being opened. My blood ran cold, but I had sufficient presence of mind to knock twice—the signal of alarm—at which it had been agreed that Father Balbi was to make haste back to his cell and set all in order. In less than a minute afterwards Lawrence opened the door, and begged my pardon for giving me a very unpleasant companion. This was a man between forty and fifty, short, thin, ugly, and badly dressed, wearing a black wig; while I was looking at him he was unbound by two guards. I had no reason to doubt that he was a knave, since Lawrence told me so before his face without his displaying the slightest emotion.

"The Court," I said, "can do what seems good to it." After Lawrence had brought him a bed he told him that the Court allowed him ten sous a day, and then locked us up together.

Overwhelmed by this disaster, I glanced at the fellow, whom his every feature proclaimed rogue. I was about to speak to him when he began by thanking me for having got him a bed. Wishing to gain him over, I invited him to take his meals with me. He kissed my hand, and asked me if he would still be able to claim the ten sous which the Court had allowed him. On my answering in the affirmative he fell on his knees, and drawing an enormous rosary from his pocket he cast his gaze all round the cell.

"What do you want?"

"You will pardon me, sir, but I am looking for some statue of the Holy Virgin, for I am a Christian; if there were even a small crucifix it would be something, for I have never been in so much need of the protection of St. Francis d'Assisi, whose name I bear, though all unworthy."

I could scarcely help laughing, not at his Christian piety, since faith and conscience are beyond control, but at the curious turn he gave his remonstrance. I concluded he took me for a Jew; and to disabuse him of this notion I made haste to give him the "Hours of the Holy Virgin," whose picture he kissed, and then gave me the book back, telling me in a modest voice that his father—a galley officer—had neglected to have him taught to read. "I am,"

said he, "a devotee of the Holy Rosary," and he told me a host of miracles, to which I listened with the patience of an angel. When he had come to an end I asked him if he had had his dinner, and he replied that he was dying of hunger. I gave him everything I had, which he devoured rather than ate; drinking all my wine, and then becoming maudlin he began to weep, and finally to talk without rhyme or reason. I asked him how he got into trouble, and he told me the following story:

"My aim and my only aim has always been the glory of God, and of the holy Republic of Venice, and that its laws may be exactly obeyed. Always lending an attentive ear to the plots of the wicked, whose end is to deceive, to deprive their prince of his just dues, and to conspire secretly, I have over and again unveiled their secret plans, and have not failed to report to Messer-Grande all I know. It is true that I am always paid, but the money has never given me so much pleasure as the thought that I have been able to serve the blessed St. Mark. I have always despised those who think there is something dishonourable in the business of a spy. The word sounds ill only to the ill-affected; for a spy is a lover of the state, the scourge of the guilty, and the faithful subject of his prince. When I have been put to the test, the feeling of friendship, which might count for something with other men, has never had the slightest influence over me, and still less the sentiment which is called gratitude. I have often, in

order to worm out a secret, sworn to be as silent as the grave, and have never failed to reveal it. Indeed, I am able to do so with full confidence, as my director who is a good Jesuit has told me that I may lawfully reveal such secrets, not only because my intention was to do so, but because, when the safety of the state is at stake, there is no such thing as a binding oath. I must confess that in my zeal I have betrayed my own father, and that in me the promptings of our weak nature have been quite mortified. Three weeks ago I observed that there was a kind of cabal between four or five notables of the town of Isola, where I live. I knew them to be disaffected to the Government on account of certain contraband articles which had been confiscated. The first chaplain—a subject of Austria by birth—was in the plot. They gathered together of evenings in an inn, in a room where there was a bed; there they drank and talked, and afterwards went their ways. As I was determined to discover the conspiracy, I was brave enough to hide under the bed on a day on which I was sure I would not be seen. Towards the evening my gentlemen came, and began to talk; amongst other things, they said that the town of Isola was not within the jurisdiction of St. Mark, but rather in the principality of Trieste, as it could not possibly be considered to form part of the Venetian territory. The chaplain said to the chief of the plot, a man named Pietro Paolo, that if he and the others would sign a document to that effect, he himself would go

to the imperial ambassador, and that the Empress would not only take possession of the island, but would reward them for what they had done. They all professed themselves ready to go on, and the chaplain promised to bring the document the next day, and afterwards to take it to the ambassadors.

"I determined to frustrate this detestable project, although one of the conspirators was my gossip—a spiritual relationship which gave him a greater claim on me than if he had been my own brother.

"After they were gone, I came out of my hiding-place, and did not think it necessary to expose myself to danger by hiding again as I had found out sufficient for my purpose. I set out the same night in a boat, and reached here the next day before noon. I had the names of the six rebels written down, and I took the paper to the secretary of the Tribunal, telling him all I had heard. He ordered me to appear, the day following, at the palace, and an agent of the Government should go back with me to Isola that I might point the chaplain out to him, as he had probably not yet gone to the Austrian ambassador's. 'That done,' said the lord secretary, 'you will no longer meddle in the matter.' I executed his orders, and after having shewn the chaplain to the agent, I was at leisure for my own affairs.

"After dinner my gossip called me in to shave him (for I am a barber by profession), and after I had done so he gave me a capital glass of *refosco*

with some slices of sausages, and we ate together in all good fellowship. My love for him had still possession of my soul, so I took his hand, and, shedding some heartfelt tears, I advised him to have no more to do with the canon, and above all, not to sign the document he knew of. He protested that he was no particular friend of the chaplain's, and swore he did not know what document I was talking about. I burst into a laugh, telling him it was only my joke, and went forth very sorry at having yielded to a sentiment of affection which had made me commit so grievous a fault. The next day I saw neither the man nor the chaplain. A week after, having paid a visit to the palace, I was promptly imprisoned, and here I am with you, my dear sir. I thank St. Francis for having given me the company of a good Christian, who is here for reasons of which I desire to know nothing, for I am not curious. My name is Soradaci, and my wife is a Legrenzi, daughter of a secretary to the Council of Ten, who, in spite of all prejudice to the contrary, determined to marry me. She will be in despair at not knowing what has become of me, but I hope to be here only for a few days, since the only reason of my imprisonment is that the secretary wishes to be able to examine me more conviently."

I shuddered to think of the monster who was with me, but feeling that the situation was a risky one, and that I should have to make use of him, I compassionated him, praised his patriotism, and pre-

dicted that he would be set at liberty in a few days. A few moments after he fell asleep, and I took the opportunity of telling the whole story to Father Balbi, shewing him that we should be obliged to put off our work to a more convenient season. Next day I told Lawrence to buy me a wooden crucifix, a statue of Our Lady, a portrait of St. Francis, and two bottles of holy water. Soradaci asked for his ten sous, and Lawrence, with an air of contempt, gave him twenty. I asked Lawrence to buy me four times the usual amount of garlic, wine, and salt—a diet in which my hateful companion delighted. After the gaoler was gone I deftly drew out the letter Balbi had written me, and in which he drew a vivid picture of his alarm. He thought all was lost, and over and over again thanked Heaven that Lawrence had put Soradaci in my cell, "for," said he, "if he had come into mine, he would not have found me there, and we should possibly have shared a cell in The Wells as a reward for our endeavours."

Soradaci's tale had satisfied me that he was only imprisoned to be examined, as it seemed plain that the secretary had arrested him on suspicion of bearing false witness. I thereupon resolved to entrust him with two letters which would do me neither good nor harm if they were delivered at their addresses, but which would be beneficial to me if the traitor gave them to the secretary as a proof of his loyalty, as I had not the slightest doubt he would do.

I spent two hours in writing these two letters in pencil. Next day Lawrence brought me the crucifix, the two pictures, and the holy water, and having worked the rascal well up to the point, I said,—

"I reckon upon your friendship and your courage. Here are two letters I want you to deliver when you recover your liberty. My happiness depends on your loyality, but you must hide the letters, as if they were found upon you we should both of us be undone. You must swear by the crucifix and these holy pictures not to betray me."

"I am ready, dear master, to swear to anything you like, and I owe you too much to betray you."

This speech was followed by much weeping and lamentation. He called himself unhappy wretch at being suspected of treason towards a man for whom he would have given his life. I knew my man, but I played out the comedy. Having given him a shirt and a cap, I stood up bare-headed, and then having sprinkled the cell with holy water, and plentifully bedewed him with the same liquid, I made him swear a dreadful oath, stuffed with senseless imprecations, which for that very reason were the better fitted to strike terror to his soul. After his having sworn the oath to deliver my letters to their addresses, I gave him them, and he himself proposed to sew them up at the back of his waistcoat, between the stuff and the lining, to which proceedings I assented.

I was morally sure that he would deliver my letters to the secretary on the first opportunity, so

I took the utmost care that my style of writing should not discover the trick. They could only gain me the esteem of the Court, and possibly its mercy. One of the letters was addressed to M. de Bragadin and the other to the Abbé Grimani, and I told them not to be anxious about me as I was in good hopes of soon being set at liberty, that they would find when I came out that my imprisonment had done me more good than harm, as there was no one in Venice who stood in need of reform more than I.

I begged M. de Bragadin to be kind enough to send me a pair of fur boots for the winter, as my cell was high enough for me to stand upright and to walk up and down. I took care that Soradaci should not suspect the innocent nature of these letters, as he might then have been seized with the temptation to do an honest thing for me, and have delivered them, which was not what I was aiming at. You will see, dear reader, in the following chapter, the power of oaths over the vile soul of my odious companion, and also if I have not verified the saying *In vino veritas,* for in the story he told me the wretch had shewn himself in his true colours.

CHAPTER XII

TREASON OF SORADACI—HOW I GET THE BEST OF HIM —FATHER BALBI ENDS HIS WORK—I ESCAPE FROM MY CELL—UNSEASONABLE OBSERVATIONS OF COUNT ASQUIN—THE CRITICAL MOMENT

Soradaci had had my letters for two or three days when Lawrence came one afternoon to take him to the secretary. As he was several hours away, I hoped to see his face no more; but to my great astonishment he was brought back in the evening. As soon as Lawrence had gone, he told me that the secretary suspected him of having warned the chaplain, since that individual had never been near the ambassador's, and no document of any kind was found upon him. He added that after a long examination he had been confined in a very small cell, and was then bound and brought again before the secretary, who wanted him to confess that he told someone at Isola that the priest would never return, but that he had not done so as he had said no such thing. At last the secretary got tired, called the guards, and had him brought back to my cell.

I was distressed to hear his account, as I saw that the wretch would probably remain a long time in my company. Having to inform Father Balbi of this fatal misadventure, I wrote to him during the night, and being obliged to do so more than once, I got accustomed to write correctly enough in the dark.

On the next day, to assure myself that my suspicions were well founded, I told the spy to give me the letter I had written to M. de Bragadin as I wanted to add something to it. "You can sew it up afterwards," said I.

"It would be dangerous," he replied, "as the gaoler might come in in the mean time, and then we should be both ruined."

"No matter. Give me my letters."

Thereupon the hound threw himself at my feet, and swore that on his appearing for a second time before the dreaded secretary, he had been seized with a severe trembling; and that he had felt in his back, especially in the place where the letters were, so intolerable an oppression, that the secretary had asked him the cause, and that he had not been able to conceal the truth. Then the secretary rang his bell, and Lawrence came in, unbound him, and took off his waist-coat and unsewed the lining. The secretary then read the letters and put them in a drawer of his bureau, telling him that if he had taken the letters he would have been discovered and have lost his life.

I pretended to be overwhelmed, and covering my face with my hands I knelt down at the bedside before the picture of the Virgin, and asked her to avenge me on the wretch who had broken the most sacred oaths. I afterwards lay down on the bed, my face to the wall, and remained there the whole day without moving, without speaking a word, and pretending not to hear the tears, cries, and protestations of repentance uttered by the villain. I played my part in the comedy I had sketched out to perfection. In the night I wrote to Father Balbi to come at two o'clock in the afternoon, not a minute sooner or later, to work for four hours, and not a minute more. "On this precision," I wrote, "our liberty depends, and if you observe it all will be well."

It was the 25th of October, and the time for me to carry out my design or to give it up for ever drew near. The State Inquisitors and their secretary went every year to a village on the mainland, and passed there the first three days of November. Lawrence, taking advantage of his masters' absence, did not fail to get drunk every evening, and did not appear at The Leads in the morning till a late hour.

Advised of these circumstances, I chose this time to make my escape, as I was certain that my flight would not be noticed till late in the morning. Another reason for my determination to hurry my escape, when I could no longer doubt the villainy of my detestable companion, seems to me to be worthy of record.

The greatest relief of a man in the midst of misfortune is the hope of escaping from it. He sighs for the hour when his sorrows are to end; he thinks he can hasten it by his prayers; he will do anything to know when his torments shall cease. The sufferer, impatient and enfeebled, is mostly inclined to superstition. "God," says he, "knows the time, and God may reveal it to me, it matters not how." Whilst he is in this state he is ready to trust in divination in any manner his fancy leads him, and is more or less disposed to believe in the oracle of which he makes choice.

I then was in this state of mind; but not knowing how to make use of the Bible to inform me of the moment in which I should recover my liberty, I determined to consult the divine *Orlando Furioso,* which I had read a hundred times, which I knew by heart, and which was my delight under the Leads. I idolized the genius of Ariosto, and considered him a far better fortune-teller than Virgil.

With this idea I wrote a question addressed to the supposed Intelligence, in which I ask in what canto of Ariosto I should find the day of my deliverance. I then made a reversed pyramid composed of the number formed from the words of the question, and by subtracting the number nine I obtained, finally, *nine.* This told me that I should find my fate in the ninth canto. I followed the same method to find out the exact stanza and verse, and got *seven* for the stanza and *one* for the verse.

I took up the poem, and my heart beating as if I trusted wholly in the oracle, I opened it, turned down the leaf, and read,—

Fra il fin d'ottobre, e il capo di novembre.

The precision of the line and its appropriateness to my circumstances appeared so wonderful to me, that I will not confess that I placed my faith entirely in it; but the reader will pardon me if I say that I did all in my power to make the prediction a correct one. The most singular circumstance is that *between the end of October and the beginning of November,* there is only the instant midnight, and it was just as the clock was striking midnight on the 31st of October that I escaped from my cell, as the reader will soon see.

The following is the manner in which I passed the morning to strike awe into the soul of that vicious brute, to confound his feeble intellect, and to render him harmless to me.

As soon as Lawrence had left us I told Soradaci to come and take some soup. The scoundrel was in bed, and he had told Lawrence that he was ill. He would not have dared to approach me if I had not called him. However, he rose from his bed, and threw himself flat upon the ground at my feet, and said, weeping violently, that if I would not forgive him he would die before the day was done, as he already felt the curse and the vengeance of the Holy Virgin which I had denounced against him. He felt devouring pains in his bowels, and his mouth was cov-

ered with sores. He shewed it me, and I saw it was full of ulcers, but I cannot say whether it was thus the night before. I did not much care to examine him to see if he were telling me the truth. My cue was to pretend to believe him, and to make him hope for mercy. I began by making him eat and drink. The traitor most likely intended to deceive me, but as I was myself determined to deceive him it remained to be seen which was the acuter. I had planned an attack against which it was improbable that he could defend himself.

Assuming an inspired air, I said, "Be seated and take this soup, and afterwards I will tell you of your good fortune, for know that the Virgin of the Rosary appeared to me at day-break, and bids me pardon you. Thou shalt not die but live, and shalt come out of this place with me." In great wonderment, and kneeling on the ground for want of a chair, he ate the soup with me, and afterwards seated himself on the bed to hear what I had to say. Thus I spoke to him:

"The grief I experienced at your dreadful treason made me pass a sleepless night, as the letters might condemn me to spend here the remnant of my days. My only consolation, I confess, was the certainty that you would die here also before my eyes within three days. Full of this thought not worthy of a Christian (for God bids us forgive our enemies) my weariness made me sleep, and in my sleep I had a vision. I saw that Holy Virgin, Mother of God,

whose likeness you behold—I saw her before me, and opening her lips she spoke thus:

"'Soradaci is a devotee of my Holy Rosary. I protect him, and I will that you forgive him, and then the curse he has drawn on himself will cease. In return for your generosity I will order one of my angels to take the form of man, to come down from heaven, to break open the roof of your prison, and set you free within five or six days. The angel will begin his task this day at two o'clock precisely, and he will work till half an hour before sunset, since he must ascend again into heaven while the daylight lasts. When you come out of this place, take Soradaci with you, and have a care for him if he will renounce his business of spying. Tell him all.'

"With these words the Holy Virgin vanished out of my sight, and I awoke."

I spoke all the while with a serious face and the air of one inspired, and I saw that the traitor was petrified. I then took my Book of Hours, sprinkled the cell with holy water, and pretended to pray, kissing from time to time the picture of the Virgin. An hour afterwards the brute, who so far had not opened his mouth, asked me bluntly at what time the angel would come down from heaven, and if we should hear him breaking in the cell.

"I am certain that he will begin at two o'clock, that we shall hear him at his work, and that he will depart at the hour named by the Holy Virgin."

"You may have dreamt it all."

"Nay, not so. Will you swear to me to spy no more?"

Instead of answering he went off to sleep, and did not awake for two hours after, when he asked if he could put off taking the oath. I asked of him,—

"You can put off taking it," I said, "till the angel enters to set me free; but if you do not then renounce by an oath the infamous trade which has brought you here, and which will end by bringing you to the gallows, I shall leave you in the cell, for so the Mother of God commands, and if you do not obey you will lose her protection."

As I had expected, I saw an expression of satisfaction on his hideous features, for he was quite certain that the angel would not come. He looked at me with a pitying air. I longed to hear the hour strike. The play amused me intensely, for I was persuaded that the approach of the angel would set his miserable wits a-reeling. I was sure, also, that the plan would succeed if Lawrence had not forgotten to give the monk the books, and this was not likely.

An hour before the time appointed I was fain to dine. I only drank water, and Soradaci drank all the wine and consumed all the garlic I had, and thus made himself worse.

As soon as I heard the first stroke of two I fell on my knees, ordering him, in an awful voice, to do

the like. He obeyed, looking at me in a dazed way. When I heard the first slight noise I exclaimed, "Lo! the angel cometh!" and fell down on my face, and with a hearty fisticuff forced him into the same position. The noise of breaking was plainly heard, and for a quarter of an hour I kept in that troublesome position, and if the circumstances had been different I should have laughed to see how motionless the creature was; but I restrained myself, remembering my design of completely turning the fellow's head, or at least of obsessing him for a time. As soon as I got up I knelt and allowed him to imitate me, and I spent three hours in saying the rosary to him. From time to time he dozed off, wearied rather by his position than by the monotony of the prayer, but during the whole time he never interrupted me. Now and again he dared to raise a furtive glance towards the ceiling. With a sort of stupor on his face, he turned his head in the direction of the Virgin, and the whole of his behaviour was for me the highest comedy. When I heard the clock strike the hour for the work to cease, I said to him,—

"Prostrate thyself, for the angel departeth."

Balbi returned to his cell, and we heard him no more. As I rose to my feet, fixing my gaze on the wretched fellow, I read fright on every feature, and was delighted. I addressed a few words to him that I might see in what state of mind he was. He shed tears in abundance, and what he said was mostly

extravagant, his ideas having no sequence or connection. He spoke of his sins, of his acts of devotion, of his zeal in the service of St. Mark, and of the work he had done for the Commonwealth, and to this attributed the special favours Mary had shewn him. I had to put up with a long story about the miracles of the Rosary which his wife, whose confessor was a young Dominican, had told him. He said that he did not know what use I could make of an ignorant fellow like him.

"I will take you into my service, and you shall have all that you need without being obliged to pursue the hazardous trade of a spy."

"Shall we not be able to remain at Venice?"

"Certainly not. The angel will take us to a land which does not belong to St. Mark. Will you swear to me that you will spy no more? And if you swear, will you become a perjurer a second time?"

"If I take the oath, I will surely keep it, of that there can be no doubt; but you must confess that if I had not perjured myself you would never have received such favour at the hands of the Virgin. My broken faith is the cause of your bliss. You ought, therefore, to love me and to be content with my treason."

"Dost love Judas who betrayed Jesus Christ?"

"No."

"You perceive, then, that one detests the traitor and at the same time adores the Divine Providence, which knows how to bring good out of evil. Up to

the present time you have done wickedly. You have offended God and the Virgin His Mother, and I will not receive your oath till you have expiated your sins."

"What sin have I done?"

"You have sinned by pride, Soradaci, in thinking that I was under an obligation to you for betraying me and giving my letters to the secretary."

"How shall I expiate this sin?"

"Thus. To-morrow, when Lawrence comes, you must lie on your bed, your face towards the wall, and without the slightest motion or a single glance at Lawrence. If he address you, you must answer, without looking at him, that you could not sleep, and need rest. Do you promise me entirely to do this thing?"

"I will do whatsoever you tell me."

"Quick, then, take your oath before this holy picture."

"I promise, Holy Mother of God, that when Lawrence comes I will not look at him, nor stir from my bed."

"And I, Most Holy Virgin, swear by the bowels of your Divine Son that if I see Soradaci move in the least or look towards Lawrence, I will throw myself straightway upon him and strangle him without mercy, to your honour and glory."

I counted on my threat having at least as much effect upon him as his oath. Nevertheless, as I was anxious to make sure, I asked him if he had

anything to say against the oath, and after thinking for a moment he answered that he was quite content with it. Well pleased myself, I gave him something to eat, and told him to go to bed as I needed sleep.

As soon as he was asleep I began to write, and wrote on for two hours. I told Balbi all that had happened, and said that if the work was far enough advanced he need only come above my cell to put the final stroke to it and break through. I made him note that we should set out on the night of the 31st of October, and that we should be four in all, counting his companion and mine. It was now the twenty-eighth of the month.

In the morning the monk wrote me that the passage was made, and that he should only require to work at the ceiling of my cell to break through the last board, and this would be done in four minutes. Soradaci observed his oath, pretending to sleep, and Lawrence said nothing to him. I kept my eyes upon him the whole time, and I verily believe I should have strangled him if he had made the slightest motion towards Lawrence, for a wink would have been enough to betray me.

The rest of the day was devoted to high discourses and exalted expressions, which I uttered as solemnly as I could, and I enjoyed the sight of seeing him become more and more fanatical. To heighten the effect of my mystic exhortation I dosed him

heavily with wine, and did not let him go till he had fallen into a drunken sleep.

Though a stranger to all metaphysical speculations, and a man who had never exercised his reasoning faculties except in devising some piece of spy-craft, the fellow confused me for a moment by saying that he could not conceive how an angel should have to take so much trouble to break open our cell. But after lifting my eyes to heaven, or rather to the roof of my dungeon-cell, I said,—

"The ways of God are inscrutable; and since the messenger of Heaven works not as an angel (for then a slight single blow would be enough), he works like a man, whose form he has doubtless taken, as we are not worthy to look upon his celestial body. And, furthermore," said I, like a true Jesuit, who knows how to draw advantage from everything, "I foresee that the angel, to punish us for your evil thought, which has offended the Holy Virgin, will not come to-day. Wretch, your thoughts are not those of an honest, pious, and religious man, but those of a sinner who thinks he has to do with Messer-Grande and his myrmidons."

I wanted to drive him to despair, and I had succeeded. He began to weep bitterly, and his sobs almost choked him, when two o'clock struck and no sign of the angel was heard. Instead of calming him I endeavoured to augment his misery by my complaints. The next morning he was obedient to my orders, for when Lawrence asked him how he was,

he replied without moving his head. He behaved in the same manner on the day following, and until I saw Lawrence for the last time on the morning of the 31st October. I gave him the book for Balbi, and told the monk to come at noon to break through the ceiling. I feared nothing, as Lawrence had told me that the Inquisitors and the secretary had already set out for the country. I had no reason to dread the arrival of a new companion, and all I had to do was to manage my knave.

After Lawrence was gone I told Soradaci that the angel would come and make an opening in the ceiling about noon.

"He will bring a pair of scissors with him," I said, "and you will have to cut the angel's beard and mine."

"Has the angel a beard?"

"Yes, you shall see it for yourself. Afterwards we will get out of the cell and proceed to break the roof of the palace, whence we shall descend into St. Mark's Place and set out for Germany."

He answered nothing. He had to eat by himself, for my mind was too much occupied to think about dinner—indeed, I had been unable to sleep.

The appointed hour struck—and the angel came, Soradaci was going to fall down on his face, but I told him it was not necessary. In three minutes the passage was completed, the piece of board fell at my feet, and Father Balbi into my arms. "Your work is ended and mine begun," said I to him. We embraced

each other, and he gave me the pike and a pair of scissors. I told Soradaci to cut our beards, but I could not help laughing to see the creature—his mouth all agape—staring at the angel, who was more like a devil. However, though quite beside himself, he cut our beards admirably.

Anxious to see how the land lay, I told the monk to stay with Soradaci, as I did not care to leave him alone, and I went out. I found the hole in the wall narrow, but I succeeded in getting through it. I was above the count's cell, and I came in and greeted the worthy old man. The man before me was not fitted to encounter such difficulties as would be involved in an escape by a steep roof covered with plates of lead. He asked me what my plan was, and told me that he thought I had acted rather inconsiderately. "I only ask to go forward," said I, "till I find death or freedom." "If you intend," he answered, "to pierce the roof and to descend from thence, I see no prospect of success, unless you have wings; and I at all events have not the courage to accompany you. I will remain here, and pray to God on your behalf."

I went out again to look at the roof, getting as close as I could to the sides of the loft. Touching the lower part of the roof, I took up a position between the beams, and feeling the wood with the end of the bar I luckily found them to be half rotten. At every blow of the bar they fell to dust, so feeling certain of my ability to make a large enough hole

in less than a hour I returned to my cell, and for four hours employed myself in cutting up sheets, coverlets, and bedding, to make ropes. I took care to make the knots myself and to be assured of their strength, for a single weak knot might cost us our lives. At last I had ready a hundred fathoms of rope.

In great undertakings there are certain critical points which the leader who deserves to succeed trusts to no one but himself. When the rope was ready I made a parcel of my suit, my cloak, a few shirts, stockings, and handkerchiefs, and the three of us went into the count's cell. The first thing the count did was to congratulate Soradoci on having been placed in the same cell as myself, and on being so soon about to regain his liberty. His air of speechless confusion made me want to laugh. I took no more trouble about him, for I had thrown off the mask of Tartuffe which I had found terribly inconvenient all the time I had worn it for the rascal's sake. He knew, I could see, that he had been deceived, but he understood nothing else, as he could not make out how I could have arranged with the supposed angel to come and go at certain fixed times. He listened attentively to the count, who told us we were going to our destruction, and like the coward that he was, he began to plan how to escape from the dangerous journey. I told the monk to put his bundle together while I was making the hole in the roof by the side of the loft.

At eight o'clock, without needing any help, my opening was made. I had broken up the beams, and the space was twice the size required. I got the plate of lead off in one piece. I could not do it by myself, because it was riveted. The monk came to my aid, and by dint of driving the bar between the gutter and the lead I succeeded in loosening it, and then, heaving at it with our shoulders, we beat it up till the opening was wide enough. On putting my head out through the hole I was distressed to see the brilliant light of the crescent moon then entering on its first quarter. This was a piece of bad luck which must be borne patiently, and we should have to wait till midnight, when the moon would have gone to light up the Antipodes. On such a fine night as this everybody would be walking in St. Mark's Place, and I dared not shew myself on the roof as the moonlight would have thrown a huge shadow of me on the place, and have drawn towards me all eyes, especially those of Messer-Grande and his myrmidons, and our fine scheme would have been brought to nothing by their detestable activity. I immediately decided that we could not escape till after the moon set; in the mean time I prayed for the help of God, but did not ask Him to work any miracles for me. I was at the mercy of Fortune, and I had to take care not to give her any advantages; and if my scheme ended in failure I should be consoled by the thought that I had not made a single mistake. The moon would set at eleven and sunrise was at six, so we

had seven hours of perfect darkness at our service; and though we had a hard task, I considered that in seven hours it would be accomplished.

I told Father Balbi that we could pass the three hours in talking to Count Pasquin. I requested him to go first and ask the count to lend me thirty sequins, which would be as necessary to me as my pike had been hitherto. He carried my message, and a few minutes after came and asked me to go myself, as the count wished to talk to me alone. The poor old man began by saying with great politeness that I really stood in no need of money to escape, that he had none, that he had a large family, that if I was killed the money would be lost, with a thousand other futilities of the same kind to disguise his avarice, or the dislike he felt to parting with his money. My reply lasted for half an hour, and contained some excellent arguments, which never have had and never will have any force, as the finest weapons of oratory are blunted when used against one of the strongest of the passions. It was a matter of a *nolenti baculus;* not that I was cruel enough to use force towards an unhappy old man like the count. I ended my speech by saying that if he would flee with us I would carry him upon my back like Æneas carried Anchises; but if he was going to stay in prison to offer up prayers for our success, his prayers would be absurd, as it would be a case of praying God to give success when he himself had refused to contribute the most ordinary aid.

He replied by a flood of tears, which affected me. He then asked if two sequins would be enough, and I answered in the affirmative. He then gave them to me begging me to return them to him if after getting on the roof I saw my wisest course would be to come back. I promised to do so, feeling somewhat astonished that he should deem me capable of a retreat. He little knew me, for I would have preferred death to an imprisonment which would have been life-long.

I called my companions, and we set all our baggage near the hole. I divided the hundred fathoms of rope into two packets, and we spent two hours in talking over the chances of our undertaking. The first proof which Father Balbi gave me of his fine character was to tell me, ten times over, that I had broken my word with him, since I had assured him that my scheme was complete and certain, while it was really nothing of the kind. He went so far as to tell me that if he had known as much he would not have taken me from my cell. The count also, with all the weight of his seventy years, told me that I should do well to give up so hazardous an undertaking, in which success was impossible and death probable. As he was a barrister he made me a speech as follows, and I had not much difficulty in guessing that he was inspired by the thought of the two sequins which I should have had to give him back, if he had succeeded in persuading me to stay where I was:

"The incline of the roof covered with lead plates," said he, "will render it impossible for you to walk, indeed you will scarcely be able to stand on your feet. It is true that the roof has seven or eight windows, but they are all barred with iron, and you could not keep your footing near them since they are far from the sides. Your ropes are useless, as you will find nothing whereon to fasten them; and even if you did, a man descending from such a height cannot reach the ground by himself. One of you will therefore have to lower the two others one at a time as one lowers a bucket or a bundle of wood, and he who does so will have to stay behind and go back to his cell. Which of you three has a vocation for this dangerous work of charity? And supposing that one of you is heroic enough to do so, can you tell me on which side you are going to descend? Not by the side towards the palace, for you would be seen; not by the church, as you would find yourselves still shut up, and as to the court side you surely would not think of it, for you would fall into the hands of the *arsenalotti* who are always going their rounds there. You have only the canal side left, and where is your gondola to take you off? Not having any such thing, you will be obliged to throw yourself in and escape by swimming towards St. Appollonia, which you will reach in a wretched condition, not knowing where to turn to next. You must remember that the leads are slippery, and that if you were to fall into the canal, considering the height

of the fall and the shallowness of the water, you would most certainly be killed if you could swim like sharks. You would be crushed to death, for three or four feet of water are not sufficient to counteract the effect of a fall from such a height. In short, the best fate you can expect is to find yourselves on the ground with broken arms and legs."

The effect of this discourse—a very unseasonable one, under the circumstances—was to make my blood boil, but I listened with a patience wholly foreign to my nature. The rough reproaches of the monk enraged me, and inclined me to answer him in his own way; but I felt that my position was a difficult one, and that unless I was careful I might ruin all, for I had to do with a coward quite capable of saying that he was not going to risk his life, and by myself I could not hope to succeed. I constrained myself, therefore, and as politely as I could I told them that I was sure of success, though I could not as yet communicate the details of my plan. "I shall profit by your wise counsels," said I to Count Pasquin, "and be very prudent, but my trust in God and in my own strength will carry me through all difficulties."

From time to time I stretched out my hand to assure myself that Soradaci was there, for he did not speak a word. I laughed to myself to think what he might be turning in his head now that he was convinced that I had deceived him. At half-past ten I told him to go and see what was the position

of the moon. He obeyed and returned, saying that in an hour and a-half it would have disappeared, and that there was a thick fog which would make the leads very dangerous.

"All I ask," I said, "is that the fog be not made of oil. Put your cloak in a packet with some of the rope which must be divided equally between us."

At this I was astonished to find him at my knees, kissing my hands, and entreating me not to kill him. "I should be sure," said he, "to fall over into the canal, and I should not be of any use to you. Ah! leave me here, and all the night I will pray to St. Francis for you. You can kill me or save me alive; but of this I am determined, never to follow you."

The fool never thought how he had responded to my prayers.

"You are right," I said, "you may stop here on the condition that you will pray to St. Francis; and that you go forthwith and fetch my books, which I wish to leave to the count."

He did so without answering me, doubtless with much joy. My books were worth at least a hundred crowns. The count told me that he would give them back on my return.

"You may be sure," I said, "that you will never see me here again. The books will cover your expenditure of two sequins. As to this rascal, I am delighted, as he cannot muster sufficient courage to come with me. He would be in the way, and the

fellow is not worthy of sharing with Father Balbi and myself the honours of so brave a flight."

"That's true," said the count, "provided that he does not congratulate himself to-morrow."

I asked the count to give me pens, ink, and paper, which he possessed in spite of the regulations to the contrary, for such prohibitions were nothing to Lawrence, who would have sold St. Mark himself for a crown. I then wrote the following letter, which I gave to Soradaci, not being able to read it over, as I had written it in the dark. I began by a fine heading, which I wrote in Latin, and which in English would run thus:

"*'I shall not die, but live and declare the works of the Lord.'*

"Our lords of state are bound to do all in their power to keep a prisoner under the Leads, and on the other hand the prisoner, who is fortunately not on parole, is bound also to make his escape. Their right to act thus is founded on justice, while the prisoner follows the voice of nature; and since they have not asked him whether he will be put in prison, so he ought not to ask them leave to escape.

"Jacques Casanova, writing in the bitterness of his heart, knows that he may have the ill luck to be recaptured before he succeeds in leaving the Venetian territory and escaping to a friendly state; but if so, he appeals to the humanity of the judges not to add to the misery of the condition from which, yielding to the voice of nature, he is endeavouring to

escape. He begs them, if he be taken, to return him whatever may be in his cell, but if he succeed he gives the whole to Francis Soradaci, who is still a captive for want of courage to escape, not like me preferring liberty to life. Casanova entreats their excellencies not to refuse the poor wretch this gift. Dated an hour before midnight, in the cell of Count Asquin, on October 31st, 1756."

I warned Soradaci not to give this letter to Lawrence, but to the secretary in person, who, no doubt, would interrogate him if he did not go himself to the cell, which was the more likely course. The count said my letter was perfect, but that he would give me back all my books if I returned. The fool said he wished to see me again to prove that he would return everything gladly.

But our time was come. The moon had set. I hung the half of the ropes by Father Balbi's neck on one side and his clothes on the other. I did the same to myself, and with our hats on and our coats off we went to the opening.

E quindi uscimmo a rimirar le stelle.—DANTE.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ESCAPE—I NEARLY LOSE MY LIFE ON THE ROOF—I GET OUT OF THE DUCAL PALACE, TAKE A BOAT, AND REACH THE MAINLAND—DANGER TO WHICH I AM EXPOSED BY FATHER BALBI—MY SCHEME FOR RIDDING MYSELF OF HIM

I got out the first, and Father Balbi followed me. Soradaci who had come as far as the opening, had orders to put the plate of lead back in its place, and then to go and pray to St. Francis for us. Keeping on my hands and knees, and grasping my pike firmly I pushed it obliquely between the joining of the plates of lead, and then holding the side of the plate which I had lifted I succeeded in drawing myself up to the summit of the roof. The monk had taken hold of my waistband to follow me, and thus I was like a beast of burden who has to carry and draw along at the same time; and this on a steep and slippery roof.

When we were half-way up the monk asked me to stop, as one of his packets had slipped off, and he hoped it had not gone further than the gutter. My first thought was to give him a kick and to send him

after his packet, but, praised be to God! I had sufficient self-control not to yield to it, and indeed the punishment would have been too heavy for both of us, as I should have had no chance of escaping by myself. I asked him if it were the bundle of rope, and on his replying that it was a small packet of his own containing manuscript he had found in one of the garrets under the Leads, I told him he must bear it patiently, as a single step might be our destruction. The poor monk gave a sigh, and he still clinging to my waist we continued climbing.

After having surmounted with the greatest difficulty fifteen or sixteen plates we got to the top, on which I sat astride, Father Balbi imitating my example. Our backs were towards the little island of St. George the Greater, and about two hundred paces in front of us were the numerous cupolas of St. Mark's Church, which forms part of the ducal palace, for St. Mark's is really the Doge's private chapel, and no monarch in the world can boast of having a finer. My first step was to take off my bundle, and I told my companion to do the same. He put the rope as best he could upon his thighs, but wishing to take off his hat, which was in his way, he took hold of it awkwardly, and it was soon dancing from plate to plate to join the packet of linen in the gutter. My poor companion was in despair.

"A bad omen," he exclaimed; "our task is but begun and here am I deprived of shirt, hat, and a

precious manuscript, containing a curious account of the festivals of the palace."

I felt calmer now that I was no longer crawling on hands and knees, and I told him quietly that the two accidents which had happened to him had nothing extraordinary in them, and that not even a superstitious person would call them omens, that I did not consider them in that light, and that they were far from damping my spirits.

"They ought rather," said I, "to warn you to be prudent, and to remind you that God is certainly watching over us, for if your hat had fallen to the left instead of to the right, we should have been undone; as in that case it would have fallen into the palace court, where it would have caught the attention of the guards, and have let them know that there was someone on the roof; and in a few minutes we should have been retaken."

After looking about me for some time I told the monk to stay still till I came back, and I set out, my pike in my hand, sitting astride the roof and moving along without any difficulty. For nearly an hour I went to this side and that, keeping a sharp look-out, but in vain; for I could see nothing to which the rope could be fastened, and I was in the greatest perplexity as to what was to be done. It was of no use thinking of getting down on the canal side or by the court of the palace, and the church offered only precipices which led to nothing. To get to the other side of the church towards the Canonica,

I should have had to climb roofs so steep that I saw no prospect of success. The situation called for hardihood, but not the smallest piece of rashness.

It was necessary, however, either to escape, or to re-enter the prison, perhaps never again to leave it, or to throw myself into the canal. In such a dilemma it was necessary to leave a good deal to chance, and to make a start of some kind. My eye caught a window on the canal sides, and two-thirds of the distance from the gutter to the summit of the roof. It was a good distance from the spot I had set out from, so I concluded that the garret lighted by it did not form part of the prison I had just broken. It could only light a loft, inhabited or uninhabited, above some rooms in the palace, the doors of which would probably be opened by day-break. I was morally sure that if the palace servants saw us they would help us to escape, and not deliver us over to the Inquisitors, even if they had recognized us as criminals of the deepest dye; so heartily was the State Inquisition hated by everyone.

It was thus necessary for me to get in front of the window, and letting myself slide softly down in a straight line I soon found myself astride on top of the dormer-roof. Then grasping the sides I stretched my head over, and succeeded in seeing and touching a small grating, behind which was a window of square panes of glass joined with thin strips of lead. I did not trouble myself about the window, but the grating, small as it was, appeared an insur-

mountable difficulty, failing a file, and I had only my pike.

I was thoroughly perplexed, and was beginning to lose courage, when an incident of the simplest and most natural kind came to my aid and fortified my resolution.

Philosophic reader, if you will place yourself for a moment in my position, if you will share the sufferings which for fifteen months had been my lot, if you think of my danger on the top of a roof, where the slightest step in a wrong direction would have cost me my life, if you consider the few hours at my disposal to overcome difficulties which might spring up at any moment, the candid confession I am about to make will not lower me in your esteem; at any rate, if you do not forget that a man in an anxious and dangerous position is in reality only half himself.

It was the clock of St. Mark's striking midnight, which, by a violent shock, drew me out of the state of perplexity I had fallen into. The clock reminded me that the day just beginning was All Saints' Day—the day of my patron saint (at least if I had one)—and the prophecy of my confessor came into my mind. But I confess that what chiefly strengthened me, both bodily and mentally, was the profane oracle of my beloved Ariosto: *Fra il fin d'ottobre, e il capo di novembre.*

The chime seemed to me a speaking talisman, commanding me to be up and doing, and promising

me the victory. Lying on my belly I stretched my head down towards the grating, and pushing my pike into the sash which held it I resolved to take it out in a piece. In a quarter of an hour I succeeded, and held the whole grate in my hands, and putting it on one side I easily broke the glass window, though wounding my left hand.

With the aid of my pike, using it as I had done before, I regained the ridge of the roof, and went back to the spot where I had left Balbi. I found him enraged and despairing, and he abused me heartily for having left him for so long. He assured me that he was only waiting for it to get light to return to the prison.

"What did you think had become of me?"

"I thought you must have fallen over."

"And you can find no better way than abuse to express the joy you ought to feel at seeing me again?"

"What have you been doing all this time?"

"Follow me, and you shall see."

I took up my packets again and made my way towards the window. As soon as were opposite to it I told Balbi what I had done, and asked him if he could think of any way of getting into the loft. For one it was easy enough, for the other could lower him by the rope; but I could not discover how the second of us was to get down afterwards, as there was nothing to which the rope could be fastened. If I let myself fall I might break my arms

and legs, for I did not know the distance between the window and the floor of the room. To this chain of reasoning uttered in the friendliest possible tone, the brute replied thus:

"You let me down, and when I have got to the bottom you will have plenty of time to think how you are going to follow me."

I confess that my first indignant impulse was to drive my pike into his throat. My good genius stayed my arm, and I uttered not a word in reproach of his base selfishness. On the contrary, I straightway untied my bundle of rope and bound him strongly under the elbows, and making him lie flat down I lowered him feet foremost on to the roof of the dormer-window. When he got there I told him to lower himself into the window as far as his hips, supporting himself by holding his elbows against the sides of the window. As soon as he had done so, I slid down the roof as before, and lying down on the dormer-roof, with a firm grasp of the rope I told the monk not to be afraid but to let himself go. When he reached the floor of the loft he untied himself, and on drawing the rope back I found the fall was one of fifty feet—too dangerous a jump to be risked. The monk who for two hours had been a prey to terror, seated in a position which I confess was not a very reassuring one, was now quite cool, and called out to me to throw him the ropes for him to take care of—a piece of advice you may be sure I took care not to follow.

Not knowing what to do next, and waiting for some fortunate idea, I made my way back to the ridge of the roof, and from there spied out a corner near a cupola, which I had not visited. I went towards it and found a flat roof, with a large window closed with two shutters. At hand was a tubful of plaster, a trowel, and a ladder which I thought long enough for my purpose. This was enough, and tying my rope to the first round I dragged this troublesome burden after me to the window. My next task was to get the end of the ladder (which was twelve fathoms long) into the opening, and the difficulties I encountered made me sorry that I had deprived myself of the aid of the monk.

I had set the ladder in such a way that one end touched the window, and the other went below the gutter. I next slid down to the roof of the window, and drawing the ladder towards me I fastened the end of my rope to the eighth round, and then let it go again till it was parallel with the window. I then strove to get it in, but I could not insert it farther than the fifth round, for the end of the ladder being stopped by the inside roof of the window no force on earth could have pushed it any further without breaking either the ladder or the ceiling. There was nothing to be done but to lift it by the other end; it would then slip down by its own weight. I might, it is true, have placed the ladder across the window, and have fastened the rope to it, in which manner I might have let myself down into the loft with-

out any risk; but the ladder would have been left outside to shew Lawrence and the guards where to look for us and possibly to find us in the morning.

I did not care to risk by a piece of imprudence the fruit of so much toil and danger, and to destroy all traces of our whereabouts the ladder must be drawn in. Having no one to give me a helping hand, I resolved to go myself to the parapet to lift the ladder and attain the end I had in view. I did so, but at such a hazard as had almost cost me my life. I could let go the ladder while I slackened the rope without any fear of its falling over, as it had caught to the parapet by the third rung. Then, my pike in my hand, I slid down beside the ladder to the parapet, which held up the points of my feet, as I was lying on my belly. In this position I pushed the ladder forward, and was able to get it into the window to the length of a foot, and that diminished by a good deal its weight. I now only had to push it in another two feet, as I was sure that I could get it in altogether by means of the rope from the roof of the window. To impel the ladder to the extent required I got on my knees, but the effort I had to use made me slip, and in an instant I was over the parapet as far as my chest, sustained by my elbows.

I shudder still when I think of this awful moment, which cannot be conceived in all it horror. My natural instinct made me almost unconsciously strain every nerve to regain the parapet, and—I had nearly said miraculously—I succeeded. Taking care

not to let myself slip back an inch I struggled up wards with my hands and arms, while my belly was resting on the edge of the parapet. Fortunately the ladder was safe, for with that unlucky effort which had nearly cost me so dearly I had pushed it in more than three feet, and there it remained.

Finding myself resting on my groin on the parapet, I saw that I had only to lift up my right leg and to put up first one knee and then the other to be absolutely out of danger; but I had not yet got to the end of my trouble. The effort I made gave me so severe a spasm that I became cramped and unable to use my limbs. However, I did not lose my head, but kept quiet till the pain had gone off, knowing by experience that keeping still is the best cure for the false cramp. It was a dreadful moment! In two minutes I made another effort, and had the good fortune to get my two knees on to the parapet, and as soon as I had taken breath I cautiously hoisted the ladder and pushed it half-way through the window. I then took my pike, and crawling up as I had done before I reached the window, where my knowledge of the laws of equilibrium and leverage aided me to insert the ladder to its full length, my companion receiving the end of it. I then threw into the loft the bundles and the fragments that I had broken off the window, and I stepped down to the monk, who welcomed me heartily and drew in the ladder. Arm in arm, we proceeded to inspect the gloomy retreat

in which we found ourselves, and judged it to be about thirty paces long by twenty wide.

At one end were folding-doors barred with iron. This looked bad, but putting my hand to the latch in the middle it yielded to the pressure, and the door opened. The first thing we did was to make the tour of the room, and crossing it we stumbled against a large table surrounded by stools and arm-chairs. Returning to the part where we had seen windows, we opened the shutters of one of them, and the light of the stars only shewed us the cupolas and the depths beneath them. I did not think for a moment of lowering myself down, as I wished to know where I was going, and I did not recognize our surroundings. I shut the window up, and we returned to the place where we had left our packages. Quite exhausted I let myself fall on the floor, and placing a bundle of rope under my head a sweet sleep came to my relief. I abandoned myself to it without resistance, and indeed, I believe if death were to have been the result, I should have slept all the same, and I still remember how I enjoyed that sleep.

It lasted for three and a half hours, and I was awakened by the monk's calling out and shaking me. He told me that it had just struck five. He said it was inconceivable to him how I could sleep in the situation we were in. But that which was inconceivable to him was not so to me. I had not fallen asleep on purpose, but had only yielded to the demands of exhausted nature, and, if I may say so,

to the extremity of my need. In my exhaustion there was nothing to wonder at, since I had neither eaten nor slept for two days, and the efforts I had made—efforts almost beyond the limits of mortal endurance—might well have exhausted any man. In my sleep my activity had come back to me, and I was delighted to see the darkness disappearing, so that we should be able to proceed with more certainty and quickness.

Casting a rapid glance around, I said to myself, "This is not a prison, there ought, therefore, to be some easy exit from it." We addressed ourselves to the end opposite to the folding-doors, and in a narrow recess I thought I made out a doorway. I felt it over and touched a lock, into which I thrust my pike, and opened it with three or four heaves. We then found ourselves in a small room, and I discovered a key on a table, which I tried on a door opposite to us, which, however, proved to be unlocked. I told the monk to go for our bundles, and replacing the key we passed out and came into a gallery containing presses full of papers. They were the state archives. I came across a short flight of stone stairs, which I descended, then another, which I descended also, and found a glass door at the end, on opening which I entered a hall well known to me: we were in the ducal chancery. I opened a window and could have got down easily, but the result would have been that we should have been trapped in the maze of little courts around St. Mark's Church. I saw on a desk an iron instrument, of which I took possession; it

had a rounded point and a wooden handle, being used by the clerks of the chancery to pierce parchments for the purpose of affixing the leaden seals. On opening the desk I saw the copy of a letter advising the Proyeditore of Corfu of a grant of three thousand sequins for the restoration of the old fortress. I searched for the sequins but they were not there. God knows how gladly I would have taken them, and how I would have laughed the monk to scorn if he had accused me of theft! I should have received the money as a gift from Heaven, and should have regarded myself as its master by conquest.

Going to the door of the chancery, I put my bar in the keyhole, but finding immediately that I could not break it open, I resolved on making a hole in the door. I took care to choose the side where the wood had fewest knots, and working with all speed I struck as hard and as cleaving strokes as I was able. The monk, who helped me as well as he could with the punch I had taken from the desk, trembled at the echoing clamour of my pike which must have been audible at some distance. I felt the danger myself, but it had to be risked.

In half an hour the hole was large enough—a fortunate circumstance, for I should have had much trouble in making it any larger without the aid of a saw. I was afraid when I looked at the edges of the hole, for they bristled with jagged pieces of wood which seemed made for tearing clothes and flesh together. The hole was at a height of five feet from

the ground. We placed beneath it two stools, one beside the other, and when we had stepped upon them the monk with arms crossed and head foremost began to make his way through the hole, and taking him by the thighs, and afterwards by the legs, I succeeded in pushing him through, and though it was dark I felt quite secure, as I knew the surroundings. As soon as my companion had reached the other side I threw him my belongings, with the exception of the ropes, which I left behind, and placing a third stool on the two others, I climbed up, and got through as far as my middle, though with much difficulty, owing to the extreme narrowness of the hole. Then, having nothing to grasp with my hands, nor anyone to push me as I had pushed the monk, I asked him to take me, and draw me gently and by slow degrees towards him. He did so, and I endured silently the fearful torture I had to undergo, as my thighs and legs were torn by the splinters of wood.

As soon as I got through I made haste to pick up my bundle of linen, and going down two flights of stairs I opened without difficulty the door leading into the passage whence opens the chief door to the grand staircase, and in another the door of the closet of the *Savio alla scrittura.* The chief door was locked, and I saw at once that, failing a catapult or a mine of gunpowder, I could not possibly get through. The bar I still held seemed to say, *"Hic fines posuit.* My use is ended and you can lay me down." It was dear to me as the instrument of free-

dom, and was worthy of being hung as an *ex voto* on the altar of liberty.

I sat down with the utmost tranquillity, and told the monk to do the same.

"My work is done," I said, "the rest must be left to God and fortune.

"Abbia chi regge il ciel cura del resto,
O la fortuna se non tocca a lui.

"I do not know whether those who sweep out the palace will come here to-day, which is All Saints' Day, or to-morrow, All Souls' Day. If anyone comes, I shall run out as soon as the door opens, and do you follow after me; but if nobody comes, I do not budge a step, and if I die of hunger so much the worse for me."

At this speech of mine he became beside himself. He called me a madman, seducer, deceiver, and liar. I let him talk, and took no notice. It struck six; only an hour had passed since I had my awakening in the loft.

My first task was to change my clothes. Father Balbi looked like a peasant, but he was in better condition than I, his clothes were not torn to shreds or covered with blood, his red flannel waistcoat and purple breeches were intact, while my figure could only inspire pity or terror, so bloodstained and tattered was I. I took off my stockings, and the blood gushed out of two wounds I had given myself on the parapet, while the splinters in the hole in the door

had torn my waistcoat, shirt, breeches, legs and thighs. I was dreadfully wounded all over my body. I made bandages of hankerchiefs, and dressed my wounds as best I could, and then put on my fine suit, which on a winter's day would look odd enough. Having tied up my hair, I put on white stockings, a laced shirt, failing any other, and two others over it, and then stowing away some stockings and handkerchiefs in my pockets, I threw everything else into a corner of the room. I flung my fine cloak over the monk, and the fellow looked as if he had stolen it. I must have looked like a man who has been to a dance and has spent the rest of the night in a disorderly house, though the only foil to my reasonable elegance of attire was the bandages round my knees.

In this guise, with my exquisite hat trimmed with Spanish lace and adorned with a white feather on my head, I opened a window. I was immediately remarked by some lounger in the palace court, who, not understanding what anyone of my appearance was doing there at such an early hour, went to tell the door-keeper of the circumstance. He, thinking he must have locked somebody in the night before, went for his keys and came towards us. I was sorry to have let myself be seen at the window, not knowing that therein chance was working for our escape, and was sitting down listening to the idle talk of the monk, when I heard the jingling of keys. Much perturbed I got up and put my eye to a chink in the door, and saw a man with a great bunch of keys in

his hand mounting leisurely up the stairs. I told the monk not to open his mouth, to keep well behind me, and to follow my steps. I took my pike, and concealing it in my right sleeve I got into a corner by the door, whence I could get out as soon as it was opened and run down the stairs. I prayed that the man might make no resistance, as if he did I should be obliged to fell him to the earth, and I determined to do so.

The door opened, and the poor man as soon as he saw me seemed turned to a stone. Without an instant's delay and in dead silence, I made haste to descend the stairs, the monk following me. Avoiding the appearance of a fugitive, but walking fast, I went by the Giants' Stairs, taking no notice of Father Balbi, who kept calling out "To the church! to the church!"

The church door was only about twenty paces from the stairs, but the churches were no longer sanctuaries at Venice, and no one ever took refuge in them. The monk knew this, but fright had deprived him of his faculties. He told me afterwards that the motive which impelled him to go to the church was the voice of religion bidding him seek the horns of the altar.

"Why didn't you go by yourself?" said I.

"I did not like to abandon you;" but he should rather have said, "I did not like to lose the comfort of your company."

The safety I sought was beyond the borders

of the Republic, and thitherward I began to bend my steps. Already there in spirit, I must needs be there in body also. I went straight towards the chief door of the palace, and looking at no one that might be tempted to look at me I got to the canal and entered the first gondola that I came across, shouting to the boatman on the poop,—

"I want to go to Fusina; be quick and call another gondolier."

This was soon done, and while the gondola was being got off I sat down on the seat in the middle, and Balbi at the side. The odd appearance of the monk, without a hat and with a fine cloak on his shoulders, with my unseasonable attire, was enough to make people take us for an astrologer and his man.

As soon as we had passed the custom-house, the gondoliers began to row with a will along the Giudecca Canal, by which we must pass to go to Fusina or to Mestre, which latter place was really our destination. When we had traversed half the length of the canal I put my head out, and said to the waterman on the poop,—

"When do you think we shall get to Mestre?"

"But you told me to go to Fusina."

"You must be mad; I said Mestre."

The other boatman said that I was mistaken, and the fool of a monk, in his capacity of zealous Christian and friend of truth, took care to tell me that I was wrong. I wanted to give him a hearty kick as a punishment for his stupidity, but reflecting

that common sense comes not by wishing for it I burst into a peal of laughter, and agreed that I might have made a mistake, but that my real intention was to go to Mestre. To that they answered nothing, but a minute after the master boatman said he was ready to take me to England if I liked.

"Bravely spoken," said I, "and now for Mestre, ho!"

"We shall be there in three quarters of an hour, as the wind and tide are in our favour."

Well pleased I looked at the canal behind us, and thought it had never seemed so fair, especially as there was not a single boat coming our way. It was a glorious morning, the air was clear and glowing with the first rays of the sun, and my two young watermen rowed easily and well; and as I thought over the night of sorrow, the dangers I had escaped, the abode where I had been fast bound the day before, all the chances which had been in my favour, and the liberty of which I now began to taste the sweets, I was so moved in my heart and grateful to my God that, well nigh choked with my emotion, I burst into tears.

My nice companion who had hiterto only spoken to back up the gondoliers, thought himself bound to offer me his consolations. He did not understand why I was weeping, and the tone he took made me pass from sweet affliction to a strange mirthfulness which made him go astray once more, as he thought I had got mad. The poor monk, as I have said, was

a fool, and whatever was bad about him was the result of his folly. I had been under the sad necessity of turning him to account, but though without intending to do so he had almost been my ruin. It was no use trying to make him believe that I had told the gondoliers to go to Fusina whilst I intended to go to Mestre; he said I could not have thought of that till I got on to the Grand Canal.

In due course we reached Mestre. There were no horses to ride post, but I found men with coaches who did as well, and I agreed with one of them to take me to Trevisa in an hour and a quarter. The horses were put in in three minutes, and with the idea that Father Balbi was behind me I turned round to say "Get up," but he was not there. I told an ostler to go and look for him, with the intention of reprimanding him sharply, even if he had gone for a necessary occasion, for we had no time to waste, not even thus. The man came back saying he could not find him, to my great rage and indignation. I was tempted to abandon him, but a feeling of humanity restrained me. I made enquiries all round; everybody had seen him, but not a soul knew where he was. I walked along the High Street, and some instinct prompting me to put my head in at the window of a *café* I saw the wretched man standing at the bar drinking chocolate and making love to the girl. Catching sight of me, he pointed to the girl and said,—

"She's charming," and then invited me to take

a cup of chocolate, saying that I must pay, as he hadn't a penny. I kept back my wrath and answered,—

"I don't want any, and do you make haste!" and caught hold of his arm in such sort that he turned white with pain. I paid the money and we went out. I trembled with anger. We got into our coach, but we had scarcely gone ten paces before I recognised an inhabitant of Mestre named Balbi Tommasi, a good sort of man, but reported to be one of the familiars of the Holy Office. He knew me, too, and coming up called out,—

"I am delighted to see you here. I suppose you have just escaped. How did you do it?"

"I have not escaped, but have been set at liberty."

"No, no, that's not possible, as I was at M. Grimani's yesterday evening, and I should have heard of it."

It will be easier for the reader to imagine my state of mind than for me to describe it. I was discovered by a man whom I believed to be a hired agent of the Government, who only had to give a glance to one of the *sbirri* with whom Mestre swarmed to have me arrested. I told him to speak softly, and getting down I asked him to come to one side. I took him behind a house, and seeing that there was nobody in sight, a ditch in front, beyond which the open country extended, I grasped my pike, and took him by the neck. At this he gave a struggle, slipped out of my hands, leapt over the ditch, and without turn-

ing round set off to run at full speed. As soon as he was some way off he slackened his course, turned round and kissed his hand to me, in token of wishing me a prosperous journey. And as soon as he was out of my sight I gave thanks to God that this man by his quickness had preserved me from the commission of a crime, for I would have killed him; and he, as it turned out, bore me no ill will.

I was in a terrible position. In open war with all the powers of the Republic, everything had to give way to my safety, which made me neglect no means of attaining my ends.

With the gloom of a man who has passed through a great peril, I gave a glance of contempt towards the monk, who now saw to what danger he had exposed us, and then got up again into the carriage. We reached Trevisa without further adventure, and I told the posting-master to get me a carriage and two horses ready by ten o'clock; though I had no intention of continuing my journey along the highway, both because I lacked means and because I feared pursuit. The inn-keeper asked me if I would take any breakfast, of which I stood in great need, for I was dying with hunger, but I did not dare to accept his offer, as a quarter of an hour's delay might prove fatal. I was afraid of being retaken, and of being ashamed of it for the rest of my life; for a man of sense ought to be able to snap his fingers at four hundred thousand men in the open country, and if he cannot escape capture he must be a fool.

I went out by St. Thomas's Gate as if I was going for a short walk, and after walking for a mile on the highway I struck into the fields, resolving not to leave them as long as I should be within the borders of the Republic. The shortest way was by Bassano, but I took the longer path, thinking I might possibly be expected on the more direct road, while they would never think of my leaving the Venetian territory by way of Feltre, which is the longest way of getting into the state subject to the Bishop of Trent.

After walking for three hours I let myself drop to the ground, for I could not move a step further. I must either take some food or die there, so I told the monk to leave the cloak with me and go to a farm I saw, there to buy something to eat. I gave him the money, and he set off, telling me that he thought I had more courage. The miserable man did not know what courage was, but he was more robust than myself, and he had, doubtless, taken in provisions before leaving the prison. Besides he had had some chocolate; he was thin and wiry, and a monk, and mental anxieties were unknown to him.

Although the house was not an inn, the good farmer's wife sent me a sufficient meal which only cost me thirty Venetian sous. After satisfying my appetite, feeling that sleep was creeping on me, I set out again on the tramp, well braced up. In four hours' time I stopped at a hamlet, and found that I was twenty-four miles from Trevisa. I was done up, my ankles were swollen, and my shoes were in holes.

There was only another hour of day-light before us. Stretching myself out beneath a grove of trees I made Father Balbi sit by me, and discoursed to him in the manner following:

"We must make for Borgo di Valsugano, it is the first town beyond the borders of the Republic. We shall be as safe there as if we were in London, and we can take our ease for awhile; but to get there we must go carefully to work, and the first thing we must do is to separate. You must go by Mantello Woods, and I by the mountains; you by the easiest and shortest way, and I by the longest and most difficult; you with money and I without a penny. I will make you a present of my cloak, which you must exchange for a great coat and a hat, and everybody will take you for a countryman, as you are luckily rather like one in the face. Take these seventeen livres, which is all that remains to me of the two sequins Count Asquin gave me. You will reach Borgo by the day after to-morrow, and I shall be twenty-four hours later. Wait for me in the first inn on the left-hand side of the street, and be sure I shall come in due season. I require a good night's rest in a good bed; and Providence will get me one somewhere, but I must sleep without fear of being disturbed, and in your company that would be out of the question. I am certain that we are being sought for on all sides, and that our descriptions have been so correctly given that if we went into any inn together we should be certain to be arrested.

You see the state I am in, and my urgent necessity for a ten hours' rest. Farewell, then, do you go that way and I will take this, and I will find somewhere near here a rest for the sole of my foot."

"I have been expecting you to say as much," said Father Balbi, "and for answer I will remind you of the promise you gave me when I let myself be persuaded to break into your cell. You promised me that we should always keep company; and so don't flatter yourself that I shall leave you, your fate and mine are linked together. We shall be able to get a good refuge for our money, we won't go to the inns, and no one will arrest us."

"You are determined, are you, not to follow the good advice I have given you?"

"I am."

"We shall see about that."

I rose to my feet, though with some difficulty, and taking the measure of his height I marked it out upon the ground, then drawing my pike from my pocket, I proceeded with the utmost coolness to excavate the earth, taking no notice of the questions the monk asked me. After working for a quarter of an hour I set myself to gaze sadly upon him, and I told him that I felt obliged as a Christian to warn him to commend his soul to God, "since I am about to bury you here, alive or dead; and if you prove the stronger, you will bury me. You can escape if you wish to, as I shall not pursue you."

He made no reply, and I betook myself to my

work again, but I confess that I began to be afraid of being pushed to extremities by this brute, of whom I was determined to rid myself.

At last, whether convinced by my arguments or afraid of my pike, he came towards me. Not guessing what he was about, I presented the point of my pike towards him, but I had nothing to fear.

"I will do what you want," said he.

I straightway gave him all the money I had, and promising to rejoin him at Borgo I bade him farewell. Although I had not a penny in my pocket and had two rivers to cross over, I congratulated myself on having got rid of a man of his character, for by myself I felt confident of being able to cross the bounds of the Republic.

CHAPTER XIV

I FIND A LODGING IN THE HOUSE OF THE CHIEF OF THE SBIRRI—I PASS A GOOD NIGHT THERE AND RECOVER MY STRENGTH—I GO TO MASS—A DISAGREEABLE MEETING—I AM OBLIGED TO TAKE SIX SEQUINS BY FORCE—OUT OF DANGER—ARRIVAL AT MUNICH—BALBI—I SET OUT FOR PARIS—MY ARRIVAL—ATTEMPT ON THE LIFE OF LOUIS XV

As soon as I saw Father Balbi far enough off I got up, and seeing at a little distance a shepherd keeping his flock on the hill-side, I made my way towards him to obtain such information as I needed. "What is the name of this village, my friend?" said I.

"Valde Piadene, signor," he answered, to my surprise, for I found I was much farther on my way than I thought. I next asked him the owners of five or six houses which I saw scattered around, and the persons he mentioned chanced to be all known to me, but were not the kind of men I should have cared to trouble with my presence.. On my asking him the name of a palace before me, he said it belonged to the Grimanis, the chief of whom was a State In-

quisitor, and then resident at the palace, so I had to take care not to let him see me. Finally, on my enquiring the owner of a red house in the distance, he told me, much to my surprise, that it belonged to the chief of the *sbirri*. Bidding farewell to the kindly shepherd I began to go down the hill mechanically, and I am still puzzled to know what instinct directed my steps towards that house, which common sense and fear also should have made me shun. I steered my course for it in a straight line, and I can say with truth that I did so quite unwittingly. If it be true that we have all of us an invisible intelligence —a beneficent genius who guides our steps aright— as was the case with Socrates, to that alone I should attribute the irresistible attraction which drew me towards the house where I had most to dread. However that may be, it was the boldest stroke I have played in my whole life.

I entered with an easy and unconstrained air, and asked a child who was playing at top in the court-yard where his father was. Instead of replying, the child went to call his mother, and directly afterwards appeared a pretty woman in the family way, who politely asked me my business with her husband, apologizing for his absence.

"I am sorry," I said, "to hear that my gossip is not in, though at the same time I am delighted to make the acquaintance of his charming wife."

"Your gossip? You will be M. Vetturi, then? My husband told me that you had kindly promised

to be the god-father of our next child. I am delighted to know you, but my husband will be very vexed to have been away."

"I hope he will soon return, as I wanted to ask him for a night's lodging. I dare not go anywhere in the state you see me."

"You shall have the best bed in the house, and I will get you a good supper. My husband when he comes back will thank your excellence for doing us so much honour. He went away with all his people an hour ago, and I don't expect him back for three or four days."

"Why is he away for such a long time, my dear madam?"

"You have not heard, then, that two prisoners have escaped from The Leads? One is a noble and the other a private individual named Casanova. My husband has received a letter from Messer-Grande ordering him to make a search for them; if he find them he will take them back to Venice, and if not he will return here, but he will be on the look-out for three days at least."

"I am sorry for this accident, my dear madam, but I should not like to put you out, and indeed I should be glad to lie down immediately."

"You shall do so, and my mother shall attend to your wants. But what is the matter with your knees?"

"I fell down whilst hunting on the mountains,

and gave myself some severe wounds, and am much weakened by loss of blood."

"Oh! my poor gentleman, my poor gentleman! But my mother will cure you."

She called her mother, and having told her of my necessities she went out. This pretty *sbirress* had not the wit of her profession, for the story I had told her sounded like a fairy-tale. On horseback with white silk stockings! Hunting in sarcenet, without cloak and without a man! Her husband would make fine game of her when he came back; but God bless her for her kind heart and benevolent stupidity. Her mother tended me with all the politeness I should have met with in the best families. The worthy woman treated me like a mother, and called me "son" as she attended to my wounds. The name sounded pleasantly in my ears, and did no little towards my cure by the sentiments it awoke in my breast. If I had been less taken up with the position I was in I should have repaid her care with some evident marks of the gratitude I felt, but the place I was in and the part I was playing made the situation too serious a one for me to think of anything else.

This kindly woman, after looking at my knees and my thighs, told me that I must make my mind to suffer a little pain, but I might be sure of being cured by the morning. All I had to do was to bear the application of medicated linen to my wounds, and not to stir till the next day. I promised to bear

the pain patiently, and to do exactly as she told me.

I was given an excellent supper, and I ate and drank with good appetite. I then gave myself up to treatment, and fell asleep whilst my nurse was attending to me. I suppose she undressed me as she would a child, but I remembered nothing about it when I woke up—I was, in fact, totally unconscious. Though I had made a good supper I had only done so to satisfy my craving for food and to regain my strength, and sleep came to me with an irresistible force, as my physical exhaustion did not leave me the power of arguing myself out of it. I took my supper at six o'clock in the evening, and I heard six striking as I awoke. I seemed to have been enchanted. Rousing myself up and gathering my wits together, I first took off the linen bandages, and I was astonished to find my wounds healed and quite free from pain. I did my hair, dressed myself in less than five minutes, and finding the door of my room open I went downstairs, crossed the court, and left the house behind me, without appearing to notice two individuals who were standing outside, and must have been *sbirri*. I made haste to lengthen the distance between me and the place where I had found the kindliest hospitality, the utmost politeness, the most tender care, and best of all, new health and strength, and as I walked I could not help feeling terrified at the danger I had been in. I shuddered involuntarily; and at the present moment, after so many years, I still shudder when I think of the peril to which I

had so heedlessly exposed myself. I wondered how I managed to go in, and still more how I came out; it seemed absurd that I should not be followed. For five hours I tramped on, keeping to the woods and mountains, not meeting a soul besides a few country-folk, and turning neither to the right nor left.

It was not yet noon, when, as I went along my way, I stopped short at the sound of a bell. I was on high ground, and looking in the direction from which the sound came I saw a little church in the valley, and many people going towards it to hear mass. My heart desired to express thankfulness for the protection of Providence, and, though all nature was a temple worthy of its Creator, custom drew me to the church. When men are in trouble, every passing thought seems an inspiration. It was All Souls' Day. I went down the hill, and came into the church, and saw, to my astonishment, M. Marc Antoine Grimani, the nephew of the State Inquisitor, with Madame Marie Visani, his wife. I made my bow, which was returned, and after I had heard mass I left the church. M. Grimani followed me by himself, and when he had got near me, called me by name, saying, "What are you doing here, Casanova, and what has become of your friend?"

"I have given him what little money I had for him to escape by another road, whilst I, without a penny in my pocket, am endeavouring to reach a place of safety by this way. If your excellence

would kindly give me some help, it would speed my journey for me."

"I can't give you anything, but you will find recluses on your way who won't let you die of hunger. But tell me how you contrived to pierce the roof of The Leads."

"The story is an interesting one, but it would take up too much time, and in the meanwhile the recluses might eat up the food which is to keep me from dying of hunger."

With this sarcasm I made him a profound bow, and went upon my way. In spite of my great want, his refusal pleased me, as it made me think myself a better gentleman than the "excellence" who had referred me to the charity of recluses. I heard at Paris afterwards that when his wife heard of it she reproached him for his hard-hearted behaviour. There can be no doubt that kindly and generous feelings are more often to be found in the hearts of women than of men.

I continued my journey till sunset. Weary and faint with hunger I stopped at a good-looking house, which stood by itself. I asked to speak to the master, and the porter told me that he was not in as he had gone to a wedding on the other side of the river, and would be away for two days, but that he had bidden him to welcome all his friends while he was away. Providence! luck! chance! whichever you like.

I went in and was treated to a good supper and a good bed. I found by the addresses of some letters

which were lying about that I was being entertained in the house of M. Rombenchi—a consul, of what nation I know not. I wrote a letter to him and sealed it to await his return. After making an excellent supper and having had a good sleep, I rose, and dressing myself carefully set out again without being able to leave the porter any mark of my gratitude, and shortly afterwards crossed the river, promising to pay when I came back. After walking for five hours I dined in a monastery of Capuchins, who are very useful to people in my position. I then set out again, feeling fresh and strong, and walked along at a good pace till three o'clock. I halted at a house which I found from a countryman belonged to a friend of mine. I walked in, asked if the master was at home, and was shewn into a room where he was writing by himself. I stepped forward to greet him, but as soon as he saw me he seemed horrified and bid me be gone forthwith, giving me idle and insulting reasons for his behaviour. I explained to him how I was situated, and asked him to let me have sixty sequins on my note of hand, drawn on M. de Bragadin. He replied that he could not so much as give me a glass of water, since he dreaded the wrath of the Tribunal for my very presence in his house. He was a stockbroker, about sixty years old, and was under great obligations to me. His inhuman refusal produced quite a different effect on me than that of M. Grimani. Whether from rage, indignation, or nature, I took him by the collar, I shewed him my

pike, and raising my voice threatened to kill him. Trembling all over, he took a key from his pocket and shewing me a bureau told me he kept money there, and I had only to open it and take what I wanted; I told him to open it himself. He did so, and on his opening a drawer containing gold, I told him to count me out six sequins.

"You asked me for sixty."

"Yes, that was when I was asking a loan of you as a friend; but since I owe the money to force, I require six only, and I will give you no note of hand. You shall be repaid at Venice, where I shall write of the pass to which you forced me, you cowardly wretch!"

"I beg your pardon! take the sixty sequins, I entreat you."

"No, no more. I am going on my way, and I advise you not to hinder me, lest in my despair I come back and burn your house about your ears."

I went out and walked for two hours, until the approach of night and weariness made me stop short at the house of a farmer, where I had a bad supper and a bed of straw. In the morning, I bought an old overcoat, and hired an ass to journey on, and near Feltre I bought a pair of boots. In this guise I passed the hut called the Scala. There was a guard there who, much to my delight, as the reader will guess, did not even honour me by asking my name. I then took a two-horse carriage and got to Borgo de Valsugano in good time, and found Father

Balbi at the inn I had told him of. If he had not greeted me first I should not have known him. A great overcoat, a low hat over a thick cotton cap, disguised him to admiration. He told me that a farmer had given him these articles in exchange for my cloak, that he had arrived without difficulty, and was faring well. He was kind enough to tell me that he did not expect to see me, as he did not believe my promise to rejoin him was made in good faith. Possibly I should have been wise not to undeceive him on this count.

I passed the following day in the inn, where, without getting out of my bed, I wrote more than twenty letters to Venice, in many of which I explained what I had been obliged to do to get the six sequins.

The monk wrote impudent letters to his superior, Father Barbarigo, and to his brother nobles, and love-letters to the servant girls who had been his ruin. I took the lace off my dress, and sold my hat, and thus got rid of a gay appearance unsuitable to my position, as it made me too much an object of notice.

The next day I went to Pergina and lay there, and was visited by a young Count d'Alberg, who had discovered, in some way or another, that we had escaped from the state-prisons of Venice. From Pergina I went to Trent and from there to Bolzan, where, needing money for my dress, linen, and the continuation of my journey, I introduced myself to

an old banker named Mensch, who gave me a man to send to Venice with a letter to M. de Bragadin. In the mean time the old banker put me in a good inn where I spent the six days the messenger was away in bed. He brought me the sum of a hundred sequins, and my first care was to clothe my companion, and afterwards myself. Every day I found the society of the wretched Balbi more intolerable. "Without me you would never have escaped" was continually in his mouth, and he kept reminding me that I had promised him half of whatever money I got. He made love to all the servant girls, and as he had neither the figure nor the manners to please them, his attentions were returned with good hearty slaps, which he bore patiently, but was as outrageous as ever in the course of twenty-four hours. I was amused, but at the same time vexed to be coupled to a man of so low a nature.

We travelled post, and in three days we got to Munich, where I went to lodge at the sign of the "Stag." There I found two young Venetians of the Cantarini family, who had been there some time in company with Count Pompei, a Veronese; but not knowing them, and having no longer any need of depending on recluses for my daily bread, I did not care to pay my respects to them. It was otherwise with Countess Coronini, whom I knew at St. Justine's Convent at Venice, and who stood very well with the Bavarian Court.

This illustrious lady, then seventy years old,

gave me a good reception and promised to speak on my behalf to the Elector, with a view to his granting me an asylum in his country. The next day, having fulfilled her promise, she told me that his highness had nothing to say against me, but as for Balbi there was no safety for him in Bavaria, for as a fugitive monk he might be claimed by the monks at Munich, and his highness had no wish to meddle with the monks. The countess advised me therefore to get him out of the town as soon as possible, for him to fly to some other quarter, and thus to avoid the bad turn which his beloved brethren the monks were certain to do him.

Feeling in duty bound to look after the interests of the wretched fellow, I went to the Elector's confessor to ask him to give Balbi letters of introduction to some town in Swabia. The confessor, a Jesuit, did not give the lie to the fine reputation of his brethren of the order; his reception of me was as discourteous as it well could be. He told me in a careless way that at Munich I was well known. I asked him without flinching if I was to take this as a piece of good or bad news; but he made no answer, and left me standing. Another priest told me that he had gone out to verify the truth of a miracle of which the whole town was talking.

"What miracle is that, reverend father?" I said.

"The empress, the widow of Charles VII., whose body is still exposed to the public gaze, has warm feet, although she is dead."

"Perhaps something keeps them warm."

"You can assure yourself personally of the truth of this wonderful circumstance."

To neglect such an opportunity would have been to lose the chance of mirth or edification, and I was as desirous of the one as of the other. Wishing to be able to boast that I had seen a miracle—and one, moreover, of a peculiar interest for myself, who have always had the misfortune to suffer from cold feet—I went to see the mighty dead. It was quite true that her feet were warm, but the matter was capable of a simple explanation, as the feet of her defunct majesty were turned towards a burning lamp at a little distance off. A dancer of my acquaintance, whom curiosity had brought there with the rest, came up to me, complimented me upon my fortunate escape, and told me everybody was talking about it. His news pleased me, as it is always a good thing to interest the public. This son of Terpsichore asked me to dinner, and I was glad to accept his invitation. His name was Michel de l'Agata, and his wife was the pretty Gandela, whom I had known sixteen years ago at old Malipiero's. The Gandela was enchanted to see me, and to hear from my own lips the story of my wondrous escape. She interested herself on behalf of the monk, and offered me to give him a letter of introduction for Augsburg Canon Bassi, of Bologna, who was Dean of St. Maurice's Chapter, and a friend of hers. I took advantage of the offer, and she forthwith wrote me the letter, telling me

that I need not trouble myself any more about the monk, as she was sure that the dean would take care of him, and even make it all right at Venice.

Delighted at getting rid of him in so honourable a manner, I ran to the inn, told him what I had done, gave him the letter, and promised not to abandon him in the case of the dean's not giving him a warm welcome. I got him a good carriage, and started him off the next day at daybreak. Four days after, Balbi wrote that the dean had received him with great kindness, that he had given him a room in the deanery, that he had dressed him as an abbé, that he had introduced him to the Prince-Bishop of Armstadt, and that he had received assurances of his safety from the civil magistrates. Furthermore, the dean had promised to keep him till he obtained his secularization from Rome, and with it freedom to return to Venice, for as soon as he ceased to be a monk the Tribunal would have no lien upon him. Father Balbi finished by asking me to send him a few sequins for pocket-money, as he was too much of a gentleman to ask the dean who, quoth the ungrateful fellow, "is not gentleman enough to offer to give me anything." I gave him no answer.

As I was now alone in peace and quietness, I thought seriously of regaining my health, for my sufferings had given me nervous spasms which might become dangerous. I put myself on diet, and in three weeks I was perfectly well. In the meanwhile

Madame Rivière came from Dresden with her son and two daughters. She was going to Paris to marry the elder. The son had been diligent, and would have passed for a young man of culture. The elder daughter, who was going to marry an actor, was extremely beautiful, an accomplished dancer, and played on the clavichord like a professional, and was altogether most charming and graceful. This pleasant family was delighted to see me again, and I thought myself fortunate when Madame Rivière, anticipating my wishes, intimated to me that my company as far as Paris would give them great pleasure. I had nothing to say respecting the expenses of the journey. I had to accept their offer in its entirety. My design was to settle in Paris, and I took this stroke of fortune as an omen of success in the only town where the blind goddess freely dispenses her favours to those who leave themselves to be guided by her, and know how to take advantage of her gifts. And, as the reader will see by and by, I was not mistaken; but all the gifts of fortune were of no avail, since I abused them all by my folly. Fifteen months under the Leads should have made me aware of my weak points, but in point of fact I needed a little longer stay to learn how to cure myself of my failings.

Madame Rivière wished to take me with her, but she could not put off her departure, and I required a week's delay to get money and letters from Venice. She promised to wait a week in Strassburg,

and we agreed that if possible I would join her there. She left Munich on the 18th of December.

Two days afterwards I got from Venice the bill of exchange for which I was waiting. I made haste to pay my debts, and immediately afterwards I started for Augsburg, not so much for the sake of seeing Father Balbi, as because I wanted to make the acquaintance of the kindly dean who had rid me of him. I reached Augsburg in seven hours after leaving Munich, and I went immediately to the house of the good ecclesiastic. He was not in, but I found Balbi in an abbé's dress, with his hair covered with white powder, which set off in a new but not a pleasing manner the beauties of his complexion of about the same colour as a horse chestnut. Balbi was under forty, but he was decidedly ugly, having one of those faces in which baseness, cowardice, impudence, and malice are plainly expressed, joining to this advantage a tone of voice and manners admirably calculated to repulse anyone inclined to do him a service. I found him comfortably housed, well looked after, and well clad; he had books and all the requisites for writing. I complimented him upon his situation, calling him a fortunate fellow, and applying the same epithet to myself for having gained him all the advantages he enjoyed, and the hope of one day becoming a secular priest. But the ungrateful hound, instead of thanking me, reproached me for having craftily rid myself of him, and added that, as I was going to Paris, I might as well take him with me,

as the dullness of Augsburg was almost killing him.

"What do you want at Paris?"

"What do you want yourself?"

"To put my talents to account."

"So do I."

"Well, then, you don't require me, and can fly on your own wings. The people who are taking me to Paris would probably not care for me if I had you for a companion."

"You promised not to abandon me."

"Can a man who leaves another well provided for and an assured future be said to abandon him?"

"Well provided! I have not got a penny."

"What do you want with money? You have a good table, a good lodging, clothes, linen, attendance, and so forth. And if you want pocket-money, why don't you ask your brethren the monks?"

"Ask monks for money? They take it, but they don't give it."

"Ask your friends, then."

"I have no friends."

"You are to be pitied, but the reason probably is that you have never been a friend to anyone. You ought to say masses, that is a good way of getting money."

"I am unknown."

"You must wait, then, till you are known, and then you can make up for lost time."

"Your suggestions are idle; you will surely give me a few sequins."

"I can't spare any."

"Wait for the dean. He will be back to-morrow. You can talk to him and persuade him to lend me some money. You can tell him that I will pay it back."

"I cannot wait, for I am setting out on my journey directly, and were he here this moment I should not have the face to tell him to lend you money after all his generous treatment of you, and when he or anyone can see that you have all you need."

After this sharp dialogue I left him, and travelling post I set out, displeased with myself for having given such advantages to a man wholly unworthy of them. In the March following I had a letter from the good Dean Bassi, in which he told me how Balbi had run away, taking with him one of his servant girls, a sum of money, a gold watch, and a dozen silver spoons and forks. He did not know where he was gone.

Towards the end of the same year I learnt at Paris that the wretched man had taken refuge at Coire, the capital of the Grisons, where he asked to be made a member of the Calvinistic Church, and to be recognized as lawful husband of the woman with him; but in a short time the community discovered that the new convert was no good, and expelled him from the bosom of the Church of Calvin. Our ne'er-do-well having no more money, his wife left him, and he, not knowing what to do next, took the des-

perate step of going to Bressa, a town within the Venetian territory, where he sought the governor, telling him his name, the story of his flight, and his repentance, begging the governor to take him under his protection and to obtain his pardon.

The first effect of the *podesta's* protection was that the penitent was imprisoned, and he then wrote to the Tribunal to know what to do with him. The Tribunal told him to send Father Balbi in chains to Venice, and on his arrival Messer-Grande gave him over to the Tribunal, which put him once more under the Leads. He did not find Count Asquin there, as the Tribunal, out of consideration for his great age, had moved him to The Fours a couple of months after our escape.

Five or six years later, I heard that the Tribunal, after keeping the unlucky monk for two years under the Leads, had sent him to his convent. There, his superior fearing lest his flock should take contagion from this scabby sheep, sent him to their original monastery near Feltre, a lonely building on a height. However, Balbi did not stop there six months. Having got the key of the fields, he went to Rome, and threw himself at the feet of Pope Rezzonico, who absolved him of his sins, and released him from his monastic vows. Balbi, now a secular priest, returned to Venice, where he lived a dissolute and wretched life. In 1783 he died the death of Diogenes, minus the wit of the cynic.

At Strassburg I rejoined Madame Rivière and

her delightful family, from whom I received a sincere and hearty welcome. We were staying at the "Hôtel de l'Esprit," and we passed a few days there most pleasurably, afterwards setting out in an excellent travelling carriage for Paris the Only, Paris the Universal. During the journey I thought myself bound to the expense of making it a pleasant one, as I had not to put my hand in my pocket for other expenses. The charms of Mdlle. Rivière enchanted me, but I should have esteemed myself wanting in gratitude and respect to this worthy family if I had darted at her a single amorous glance, or if I had let her suspect my feelings for her by a single word. In fact I thought myself obliged to play the heavy father, though my age did not fit me for the part, and I lavished on this agreeable family all the care which can be given in return for pleasant society, a seat in a comfortable travelling carriage, an excellent table, and a good bed.

We reached Paris on the 5th of January, 1757, and I went to the house of my friend Baletti, who received me with open arms, and assured me that though I had not written he had been expecting me, since he judged that I would strive to put the greatest possible distance between myself and Venice, and he could think of no other retreat for me than Paris. The whole house kept holiday when my arrival became known, and I have never met with more sincere regard than in that delightful family. I greeted with enthusiasm the father and mother, whom I

found exactly the same as when I had seen them last in 1752, but I was struck with astonishment at the daughter whom I had left a child, for she was now a tall and well-shaped girl. Mdlle. Baletti was fifteen years old, and her mother had brought her up with care, had given her the best masters, virtue, grace, talents, a good manner, tact, a knowledge of society—in short, all that a clever mother can give to a dear daughter.

After finding a pleasant lodging near the Baletti's, I took a coach and went to the "Hôtel de Bourbon" with the intention of calling on M. de Bernis, who was then chief secretary for foreign affairs. I had good reasons for relying on his assistance. He was out; he had gone to Versailles. At Paris one must go sharply to work, and, as it is vulgarly but forcibly said, "strike while the iron's hot." As I was impatient to see what kind of a reception I should get from the liberal-minded lover of my fair M—— M——, I went to the Pont-Royal, took a hackney coach, and went to Versailles. Again bad luck! Our coaches had crossed each other on the way, and my humble equipage had not caught his excellency's eye. M. de Bernis had returned to Paris with Count de Castillana, the ambassador from Naples, and I determined to return also; but when I got to the gate I saw a mob of people running here and there in the greatest confusion, and from all sides I heard the cry, "The king is assassinated! The king is assassinated!"

My frightened coachman only thought of getting on his way, but the coach was stopped. I was made to get out and taken to the guard-room, where there were several people already, and in less than three minutes there were twenty of us, all under arrest, all astonished at the situation, and all as much guilty as I was. We sat glum and silent, looking at each other without daring to speak. I knew not what to think, and not believing in enchantment I began to think I must be dreaming. Every face expressed surprise, as everyone, though innocent, was more or less afraid.

We were not left in this disagreeable position for long, as in five minutes an officer came in, and after some polite apologies told us we were free.

"The king is wounded," he said, "and he has been taken to his room. The assassin, whom nobody knows, is under arrest. M. de la Martinière is being looked for everywhere."

As soon as I had got back to my coach, and was thinking myself lucky for being there, a gentlemanly-looking young man came up to me and besought me to give him a seat in my coach, and he would gladly pay half the fare; but in sipte of the laws of politeness I refused his request. I may possibly have been wrong. On any other occasion I should have been most happy to give him a place, but there are times when prudence does not allow one to be polite. I was about three hours on the way, and in this short time I was overtaken every minute

by at least two hundred couriers riding at a break-neck place. Every minute brought a new courier, and every courier shouted his news to the winds. The first told me what I knew already; then I heard that the king had been bled, that the wound was not mortal, and finally, that the wound was trifling, and that his majesty could go to the Trianon if he liked.

Fortified with this good news, I went to Silvia's and found the family at table. I told them I had just come from Versailles.

"The king has been assasinated."

"Not at all; he is able to go to the Trianon, or the Parc-aux-cerfs, if he likes. M. de la Martinière has bled him, and found him to be in no danger. The assassin has been arrested, and the wretched man will be burnt, drawn with red-hot pincers, and quartered."

This news was soon spread abroad by Silvia's servants, and a crowd of the neighbours came to hear what I had to say, and I had to repeat the same thing ten times over. At this period the Parisians fancied that they loved the king. They certainly acted the part of loyal subjects to admiration. At the present day they are more enlightened, and would only love the sovereign whose sole desire is the happiness of his people, and such a king—the first citizen of a great nation—not Paris and its suburbs, but all France, will be eager to love and obey. As for kings like Louis XV., they have become totally impracticable; but if there are any such, however

much they may be supported by interested parties, in the eyes of public opinion they will be dishonoured and disgraced before their bodies are in a grave and their names are written in the book of history.

CHAPTER XV

THE MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS—M. DE BOULOGNE, THE COMPTROLLER—M. LE DUC DE CHOISEUL—M. PARIS DU VERNAI—ESTABLISHMENT OF THE LOTTERY—MY BROTHER'S ARRIVAL AT PARIS; HIS RECEPTION BY THE ACADEMY

Once more, then, I was in Paris, which I ought to regard as my fatherland, since I could return no more to that land which gave me birth: an unworthy country, yet, in spite of all, ever dear to me, possibly on account of early impressions and early prejudices, or possibly because the beauties of Venice are really unmatched in the world. But mighty Paris is a place of good luck or ill, as one takes it, and it was my part to catch the favouring gale.

Paris was not wholly new to me, as my readers know I had spent two years there, but I must confess that, having then no other aim than to pass the time pleasantly, I had merely devoted myself to pleasure and enjoyment. Fortune, to whom I had paid no court, had not opened to me her golden doors; but I now felt that I must treat her more reverently, and

attach myself to the throng of her favoured sons whom she loads with her gifts. I understood now that the nearer one draws to the sun the more one feels the warmth of its rays. I saw that to attain my end I should have to employ all my mental and physical talents, that I must make friends of the great, and take the cue from all whom I found it to be my interest to please. To follow the plans suggested by these thoughts, I saw that I must avoid what is called bad company, that I must give up my old habits and pretensions, which would be sure to make me enemies, who would have no scruple in representing me as a trifler, and not fit to be trusted with affairs of any importance.

I think I thought wisely, and the reader, I hope, will be of the same opinion. "I will be reserved," said I, "in what I say and what I do, and thus I shall get a reputation for discretion which will bring its reward."

I was in no anxiety on the score of present needs, as I could reckon on a monthly allowance of a hundred crowns, which my adopted father, the good and generous M. de Bragadin, sent me, and I found this sum sufficient in the meanwhile, for with a little self-restraint one can live cheaply at Paris, and cut a good figure at the same time. I was obliged to wear a good suit of clothes, and to have a decent lodging; for in all large towns the most important thing is outward show, by which at the beginning one is always judged. My anxiety was only for the pressing

needs of the moment, for to speak the truth I had neither clothes nor linen—in a word, nothing.

If my relations with the French ambassador are recalled, it will be found natural that my first idea was to address myself to him, as I knew him sufficiently well to reckon on his serving me.

Being perfectly certain that the porter would tell me that my lord was engaged, I took care to have a letter, and in the morning I went to the Palais Bourbon. The porter took my letter, and I gave him my address and returned home.

Wherever I went I had to tell the story of my escape from The Leads. This became a service almost as tiring as the flight itself had been, as it took me two hours to tell my tale, without the slightest bit of fancy-work; but I had to be polite to the curious enquirers, and to pretend that I believed them moved by the most affectionate interest in my welfare. In general, the best way to please is to take the benevolence of all with whom one has relation for granted.

I supped at Silvia's, and as the evening was quieter than the night before, I had time to congratulate myself on all the friendship they shewed me. The girl was, as I had said, fifteen years old, and I was in every way charmed with her. I complimented the mother on the good results of her education, and I did not even think of guarding myself from falling a victim to her charms. I had

taken so lately such well-founded and philosophical resolutions, and I was not yet sufficiently at my ease to value the pain of being tempted. I left at an early hour, impatient to see what kind of an answer the minister had sent me. I had not long to wait, and I received a short letter appointing a meeting for two o'clock in the afternoon. It may be guessed that I was punctual, and my reception by his excellence was most flattering. M. de Bernis expressed his pleasure at seeing me after my fortunate escape, and at being able to be of service to me. He told me that M—— M—— had informed him of my escape, and he had flattered himself that the first person I should go and see in Paris would be himself. He shewed me the letters from M—— M—— relating to my arrest and escape, but all the details in the latter were purely imaginary and had no foundation in fact. M—— M—— was not to blame, as she could only write what she had heard, and it was not easy for anyone besides myself to know the real circumstances of my escape. The charming nun said that, no longer buoyed up by the hope of seeing either of the men who alone had made her in love with life, her existence had become a burden to her, and she was unfortunate in not being able to take any comfort in religion. "C—— C—— often comes to see me," she said, "but I grieve to say she is not happy with her husband."

I told M. de Bernis that the account of my flight from The Leads, as told by our friend, was wholly

inaccurate, and I would therefore take the liberty of writing out the whole story with the minutest details. He challenged me to keep my word, assuring me that he would send a copy to M—— M——, and at the same time, with the utmost courtesy, he put a packet of a hundred louis in my hand, telling me that he would think what he could do for me, and would advise me as soon as he had any communication to make.

Thus furnished with ample funds, my first care was for my dress; and this done I went to work, and in a week sent my generous protector the result, giving him permission to have as many copies printed as he liked, and to make any use he pleased of it to interest in my behalf such persons as might be of service to me.

Three weeks after, the minister summoned me to say that he had spoken of me to M. Erizzo, the Venetian ambassador, who had nothing to say against me, but for fear of embroiling himself with the State Inquisitors declined to receive me. Not wanting anything from him, his refusal did me no harm. M. de Bernis then told me that he had given a copy of my history to Madame la Marquise de Pompadour, and he promised to take the first opportunity of presenting me to this all-powerful lady. "You can present yourself, my dear Casanova," added his excellence, "to the Duc de Choiseul, and M. de Boulogne, the comptroller. You will be well received, and with a little wit you ought to be able

to make good use of the letter. He himself will give you the cue, and you will see that *he who listens obtains*. Try to invent some useful plan for the royal exchequer; don't let it be complicated or chimerical, and if you don't write it out at too great length I will give you my opinion on it."

I left the minister in a pleased and grateful mood, but extremely puzzled to find a way of increasing the royal revenue. I knew nothing of finance, and after racking my brains all that I could think of was new methods of taxation; but all my plans were either absurd or certain to be unpopular, and I rejected them all on consideration.

As soon as I found out that M. de Choiseul was in Paris I called on him. He received me in his dressing-room, where he was writing while his valet did his hair. He stretched his politeness so far as to interrupt himself several times to ask me questions, but as soon as I began to reply his grace began to write again, and I suspect did not hear what I was saying; and though now and again he seemed to be looking at me, it was plain that his eyes and his thoughts were occupied on different objects. In spite of this way of receiving visitors—or me, at all events, M. de Choiseul was a man of wit.

When he had finished writing he said in Italian that M. de Bernis had told him of some circumstances of my escape, and he added,—

"Tell me how you succeeded."

"My lord, it would be too long a story; it would

take me at least two hours, and your grace seems busy."

"Tell me briefly about it."

"However much I speak to the point, I shall take two hours."

"You can keep the details for another time."

"The story is devoid of interest without the details."

"Well, well, you can tell me the whole story in brief, without losing much of the interest."

"Very good; after that I can say no more. I must tell your lordship, then, that, the State Inquisitors shut me up under the Leads; that after fifteen months and five days of imprisonment I succeeded in piercing the roof; that after many difficulties I reached the chancery by a window, and broke open the door; afterwards I got to St. Mark's Place, whence, taking a gondola which bore me to the main-land, I arrived at Paris, and have had the honour to pay my duty to your lordship."

"But . . . what are The Leads?"

"My lord, I should take a quarter of an hour, at least, to explain."

"How did you pierce the roof?"

"I could not tell your lordship in less than half an hour."

"Why were you shut up?"

"It would be a long tale, my lord."

"I think you are right. The interest of the story lies chiefly in the details."

"I took the liberty of saying as much to your grace."

"Well, I must go to Versailles, but I shall be delighted if you will come and see me sometimes. In the meanwhile, M. Casanova, think what I can do for you."

I had been almost offended at the way in which M. de Choiseul had received me, and I was inclined to resent it; but the end of our conversation, and above all the kindly tone of his last words, quieted me, and I left him, if not satisfied, at least without bitterness in my heart.

From him I went to M. de Boulogne's, and found him a man of quite a different stamp to the duke—in manners, dress, and appearance. He received me with great politeness, and began by complimenting me on the high place I enjoyed in the opinion of M. de Bernis, and on my skill in matters of finance.

I felt that no compliment had been so ill deserved, and I could hardly help bursting into laughter. My good angel, however, made me keep my countenance.

M. de Boulogne had an old man with him, every feature bore the imprint of genius, and who inspired me with respect.

"Give me your views," said the comptroller, "either on paper or *vivâ voce*. You will find me willing to learn and ready to grasp your ideas. Here is M. Paris du Vernai, who wants twenty mil-

lions for his military school; and he wishes to get this sum without a charge on the state or emptying the treasury."

"It is God alone, sir, who has the creative power."

"I am not a god," said M. du Vernai, "but for all that I have now and then created—but the times have changed."

"Everything," I said, "is more difficult than it used to be; but in spite of difficulties I have a plan which would give the king the interest of a hundred millions."

"What expense would there be to the Crown?"

"Merely the cost of receiving."

"The nation, then, would furnish the sum in question?"

"Undoubtedly, but voluntarily."

"I know what you are thinking of."

"You astonish me, sir, as I have told nobody of my plan."

"If you have no other engagement, do me the honour of dining with me to-morrow, and I will tell you what your project is. It is a good one, but surrounded, I believe, with insuperable difficulties. Nevertheless, we will talk it over and see what can be done. Will you come?"

"I will do myself that honour."

"Very good, I will expect you at Plaisance."

After he had gone, M. de Boulogne praised his talents and honesty. He was the brother of M. de

Monmartel, whom secret history makes the father of Madame de Pompadour, for he was the lover of Madame Poisson at the same time as M. le Normand.

I left the comptroller's and went to walk in the Tuileries, thinking over the strange stroke of luck which had happened to me. I had been told that twenty millions were wanted, and I had boasted of being able to get a hundred, without the slightest idea of how it was to be done; and on that a well-known man experienced in the public business had asked me to dinner to convince me that he knew what my scheme was. There was something odd and comic about the whole affair; but that corresponded very well with my modes of thought and action. "If he thinks he is going to pump me," said I, "he will find himself mistaken. When he tells me what the plan is, it will rest with me to say he has guessed it or he is wrong, as the inspiration of the moment suggests. If the question lies within my comprehension I may, perhaps, be able to suggest something new; and if I understand nothing I will wrap myself up in a mysterious silence, which sometimes produces a good effect. At all events, I will not repulse Fortune when she appears to be favourable to me."

M. de Bernis had only told M. de Boulogne that I was a financier to get me a hearing, as otherwise he might have declined to see me. I was sorry not to be master, at least, of the jargon of the business, as in that way men have got out of a similar diffi-

culty, and by knowing the technical terms, and nothing more, have made their mark. No matter, I was bound to the engagement. I must put a good face on a bad game, and if necessary pay with the currency of assurance. The next morning I took a carriage, and in a pensive mood I told the coachman to take me to M. du Vernai's, at Plaisance—a place a little beyond Vincennes.

I was set down at the door of the famous man who, forty years ago, had rescued France on the brink of the precipice down which Law had almost precipitated her. I went in and saw a great fire burning on the hearth, which was surrounded by seven or eight persons, to whom I was introduced as a friend of the minister for foreign affairs and of the comptroller; afterwards he introduced these gentlemen to me, giving to each his proper title, and I noted that four of them were treasury officials. After making my bow to each, I gave myself over to the worship of Harpocrates, and without too great an air of listening was all ears and eyes.

The conversation at first was of no special interest as they were talking of the Seine being frozen over, the ice being a foot thick. Then came the recent death of M. de Fontenelle, then the case of Damien, who would confess nothing, and of the five millions his trial would cost the Crown. Then coming to war they praised M. de Soubise, who had been chosen by the king to command the army. Hence

the transition was easy to the expenses of the war, and how they were to be defrayed.

I listened and was weary, for all they said was so full of technicalities that I could not follow the meaning; and if silence can ever be imposing, my determined silence of an hour and a half's duration ought to have made me seem a very important personage in the eyes of these gentlemen. At last, just as I was beginning to yawn, dinner was announced, and I was another hour and a half without opening my mouth, except to do honour to an excellent repast. Directly the dessert had been served, M. du Vernai asked me to follow him into a neighbouring apartment, and to leave the other guests at the table. I followed him, and we crossed a hall where we found a man of good aspect, about fifty years old, who followed us into a closet and was introduced to me by M. du Vernai under the name of Calsabigi. Directly after, two superintendents of the treasury came in, and M. du Vernai smilingly gave me a folio book, saying,—

"That, I think, M. Casanova, is your plan."

I took the book and read, *Lottery consisting of ninety tickets, to be drawn every month, only one in eighteen to be a winning number.* I gave him back the book and said, with the utmost calmness,—

"I confess, sir, that is exactly my idea."

"You have been anticipated, then; the project is by M. de Calsabigi here."

"I am delighted, not at being anticipated, but

to find that we think alike; but may I ask you why you have not carried out the plan?"

"Several very plausible reasons have been given against it, which have had no decisive answers."

"I can only conceive one reason against it," said I, coolly; "perhaps the king would not allow his subjects to gamble."

"Never mind that, the king will let his subjects gamble as much as they like: the question is, will they gamble?"

"I wonder how anyone can have any doubt on that score, as the winners are certain of being paid."

"Let us grant, then, that they will gamble: how is the money to be found?"

"How is the money to be found? The simplest thing in the world. All you want is a decree in council authorizing you to draw on the treasury. All I want is for the nation to believe that the king can afford to pay a hundred millions."

"A hundred millions!"

"Yes, a hundred millions, sir. We must dazzle people."

"But if France is to believe that the Crown can afford to pay a hundred millions, it must believe that the Crown can afford to lose a hundred millions, and who is going to believe that? Do you?"

"To be sure I do, for the Crown, before it could lose a hundred millions, would have received at least a hundred and fifty millions, and so there need be no anxiety on that score."

"I am not the only person who has doubts on the subject. You must grant the possibility of the Crown losing on enormous sum at the first drawing?"

"Certainly, sir, but between possibility and reality is all the region of the infinite. Indeed, I may say that it would be a great piece of good fortune if the Crown were to lose largely on the first drawing."

"A piece of bad fortune, you mean, surely?"

"A bad fortune to be desired. You know that all the insurance companies are rich. I will undertake to prove before all the mathematicians in Europe that the king is bound to gain one in five in this lottery. That is the secret. You will confess that the reason ought to yield to a mathematical proof?"

"Yes, of course; but how is it that the Castelletto cannot guarantee the Crown a certain gain?"

"Neither the Castelletto nor anybody in the world can guarantee absolutely that the king shall always win. What guarantees us against any suspicion of sharp practice is the drawing once a month, as then the public is sure that the holder of the lottery may lose."

"Will you be good enough to express your sentiments on the subject before the council?"

"I will do so with much pleasure."

"You will answer all objections?"

"I think I can promise as much."

"Will you give me your plan?"

"Not before it is accepted, and I am guaranteed a reasonable profit."

"But your plan my possibly be the same as the one before us."

"I think not. I see M. de Calsabigi for the first time, and as he has not shewn me his scheme, and I have not communicated mine to him, it is improbable, not to say impossible, that we should agree in all respects. Besides, in my plan I clearly shew how much profit the Crown ought to get *per annum*."

"It might, therefore, be farmed by a company who would pay the Crown a fixed sum?"

"I think not."

"Why?"

"For this reason. The only thing which would make the lottery pay, would be an irresistible current of public opinion in its favour. I should not care to have anything to do with it in the service of a company, who, thinking to increase their profits, might extend their operations—a course which would entail certain loss."

"I don't see how."

"In a thousand ways which I will explain to you another time, and which I am sure you can guess for yourself. In short, if I am to have any voice in the matter, it must be a Government lottery or nothing."

"M. de Calsabigi thinks so, too."

"I am delighted to hear it, but not at all sur-

prised; for, thinking on the same lines, we are bound to arrive at the same results."

"Have you anybody ready for the Castelletto?"

"I shall only want intelligent machines, of whom there are plenty in France."

I went out for a moment and found them in groups on my return, discussing my project with great earnestness.

M. Calsabigi after asking me a few questions took my hand, which he shook heartily, saying he should like to have some further conversation with me; and returning the friendly pressure, I told him that I should esteem it as an honour to be numbered amongst his friends. Thereupon I left my address with M. du Vernai and took my leave, satisfied, by my inspection of the faces before me, that they all had a high opinion of my talents.

Three days after, M. de Calsabigi called on me; and after receiving him in my best style I said that if I had not called on him it was only because I did not wish to be troublesome. He told me that my decisive way of speaking had made a great impression, and he was certain that if I cared to make interest with the comptroller we could set up the lottery and make a large profit.

"I think so, too," said I, "but the financiers will make a much larger profit, and yet they do not seem anxious about it. They have not communicated with me, but it is their look-out, as I shall not make it my chief aim."

"You will undoubtedly hear something about it to-day, for I know for a fact that M. de Boulogne has spoken of you to M. de Courteuil."

"Very good, but I assure you I did not ask him to do so."

After some further conversation he asked me, in the most friendly manner possible, to come and dine with him, and I accepted his invitation with great pleasure; and just as we were starting I received a note from M. de Bernis, in which he said that if I could come to Versailles the next day he would present me to Madame de Pompadour, and that I should have an opportunity of seeing M. de Boulogne.

In high glee at this happy chance, less from vanity than policy, I made M. de Calsabigi read the letter, and I was pleased to see him opening his eyes as he read it.

"You can force Du Vernai himself to accept the lottery," he said, "and your fortune is made if you are not too rich already to care about such matters."

"Nobody is ever rich enough to despise good fortune, especially when it is not due to favour."

"Very true. We have been doing our utmost for two years to get the plan accepted, and have met with nothing beyond foolish objections which you have crushed to pieces. Nevertheless, our plans must be very similar. Believe me it will be best for us to work in concert, for by yourself you would

find insuperable difficulties in the working, and you will find no 'intelligent machines' in Paris. My brother will do all the work, and you will be able to reap the advantages at your ease."

"Are you, then, not the inventor of the scheme which has been shewn me?"

"No, it is the work of my brother."

"Shall I have the pleasure of seeing him?"

"Certainly. His body is feeble, but his mind is in all its vigour. We shall see him directly."

The brother was not a man of a very pleasing appearance, as he was covered with a kind of leprosy; but that did not prevent him having a good appetite, writing, and enjoying all his bodily and intellectual faculties; he talked well and amusingly. He never went into society, as, besides his personal disfigurement, he was tormented with an irresistible and frequent desire of scratching himself, now in one place, and now in another; and as all scratching is accounted an abominable thing in Paris, he preferred to be able to use his finger-nails to the pleasures of society. He was pleased to say that, believing in God and His works, he was persuaded his nails had been given him to procure the only solace he was capable of in the kind of fury with which he was tormented.

"You are a believer, then, in final causes? I think you are right, but still I believe you would have scratched yourself if God had forgotten to give you any nails."

My remarks made him laugh, and he then began to speak of our common business, and I soon found him to be a man of intellect. He was the elder of the two brothers, and a bachelor. He was expert in all kinds of calculations, an accomplished financier, with a universal knowledge of commerce, a good historian, a wit, a poet, and a man of gallantry. His birthplace was Leghorn, he had been in a Government office at Naples, and had come to Paris with M. de l'Hopital. His brother was also a man of learning and talent, but in every respect his inferior.

He shewed me the pile of papers, on which he had worked out all the problems referring to the lottery.

"If you think you can do without me," said he, "I must compliment you on your abilities; but I think you will find yourself mistaken, for if you have no practical knowledge of the matter and no business men to help you, your theories will not carry you far. What will you do after you have obtained the decree? When you speak before the council, if you take my advice, you will fix a date after which you are not to be held responsible—that is to say, after which you will have nothing more to do with it. Unless you do so, you will be certain to encounter trifling and procrastination which will defer your plan to the Greek Kalends. On the other hand, I can assure you that M. du Vernai would be very glad to see us join hands."

Very much inclined to take these gentlemen

into partnership, for the good reason that I could not do without them, but taking care that they should suspect nothing, I went down with the younger brother, who introduced me to his wife before dinner. I found present an old lady well known at Paris under the name of General La Mothe, famous for her former beauty and her gout, another lady somewhat advanced in years, who was called Baroness Blanche, and was still the mistress of M. de Vaux, another styled the President's lady, and a fourth, fair as the dawn, Madame Razzetti, from Piedmont, the wife of one of the violin players at the opera, and said to be courted by M. de Fondpertuis, the superintendent of the opera.

We sat down to dinner, but I was silent and absorbed, all my thoughts being monopolized by the lottery. In the evening, at Silvia's, I was pronounced absent and pensive, and so I was in spite of the sentiment with which Mademoiselle Baletti inspired me—a sentiment which every day grew in strength.

I set out for Versailles next morning two hours before day-break, and was welcomed by M. de Bernis, who said he would bet that but for him I should never have discovered my talent for finance.

"M. de Boulogne tells me you astonished M. du Vernai, who is generally esteemed one of the acutest men in France. If you will take my advice, Casanova, you will keep up that acquaintance and pay him assiduous court. I may tell you that the lottery is certain to be established, that it will be your doing,

and that you ought to make something considerable out of it. As soon as the king goes out to hunt, be at hand in the private apartments, and I will seize a favourable moment for introducing you to the famous marquise. Afterwards go to the Office for Foreign Affairs, and introduce yourself in my name to the Abbé de la Ville. He is the chief official there, and will give you a good reception."

M. de Boulogne told me that, as soon as the council of the military school had given their consent, he would have the decree for the establishment of the lottery published, and he urged me to communicate to him any ideas which I might have on the subject of finance.

At noon Madame de Pompadour passed through the private apartments with the Prince de Soubise, and my patron hastened to point me out to the illustrious lady. She made me a graceful curtsy, and told me that she had been much interested in the subject of my flight.

"Do you go," said she, "to see your ambassador?"

"I shew my respect to him, madam, by keeping away."

"I hope you mean to settle in France."

"It would be my dearest wish to do so, madam, but I stand in need of patronage, and I know that in France patronage is only given to men of talent, which is for me a discouraging circumstance."

"On the contrary, I think you have reason to be

hopeful, as you have some good friends. I myself shall be delighted if I can be of any assistance to you."

As the fair marquise moved on, I could only stammer forth my gratitude.

I next went to the Abbé de la Ville, who received me with the utmost courtesy, and told me that he would remember me at the earliest opportunity.

Versailles was a beautiful spot, but I had only compliments and not invitations to expect there, so after leaving M. de la Ville I went to an inn to get some dinner. As I was sitting down, an abbé of excellent appearance, just like dozens of other French abbés, accosted me politely, and asked me if I objected to our dining together. I always thought the company of a pleasant man a thing to be desired, so I granted his request; and as soon as he sat down he complimented me on the distinguished manner in which I had been treated by M. de la Ville. "I was there writing a letter," said he, "and I could hear all the obliging things the abbé said to you. May I ask, sir, how you obtained access to him?"

"If you really wish to know, I may be able to tell you."

"It is pure curiosity on my part."

"Well, then, I will say nothing, from pure prudence."

"I beg your pardon."

"Certainly, with pleasure."

Having thus shut the mouth of the curious impertinent, he confined his conversation to ordinary and more agreeable topics. After dinner, having no further business at Versailles, I made preparations for leaving, on which the abbé begged to be of my company. Although a man who frequents the society of abbés is not thought much more of than one who frequents the society of girls, I told him that as I was going to Paris in a public conveyance—far from its being a question of permission—I should be only too happy to have the pleasure of his company. On reaching Paris we parted, after promising to call on each other, and I went to Silvia's and took supper there. The agreeable mistress of the house complimented me on my noble acquaintances, and made me promise to cultivate their society.

As soon as I got back to my own lodging, I found a note from M. du Vernai, who requested me to come to the military school at eleven o'clock on the next day, and later in the evening Calsabigi came to me from his brother, with a large sheet of paper containing all the calculations pertaining to the lottery.

Fortune seemed to be in my favour, for this tabular statement came to me like a blessing from on high. Resolving, therefore, to follow the instructions which I pretended to receive indifferently, I went to the military school, and as soon as I arrived the conference began. M. d'Alembert had been requested to be present as an expert in arithmetical

calculations. If M. du Vernai had been the only person to be consulted, this step would not have been necessary; but the council contained some obstinate heads who were unwilling to give in. The conference lasted three hours.

After my speech, which only lasted half an hour, M. de Courteuil summed up my arguments, and an hour was passed in stating objections which I refuted with the greatest ease. I finally told them that no man of honour and learning would volunteer to conduct the lottery on the understanding that it was to win every time, and that if anyone had the impudence to give such an undertaking they should turn him out of the room forthwith, for it was impossible that such an agreement could be maintained except by some roguery.

This had its effect, for nobody replied; and M. du Vernai remarked that if the worst came to the worst the lottery could be suppressed. At this I knew my business was done, and all present, after signing a document which M. du Vernai gave them, took their leave, and I myself left directly afterwards with a friendly leave-taking from M. du Vernai.

M. Calsabigi came to see me the next day, bringing the agreeable news that the affair was settled, and that all that was wanting was the publication of the decree.

"I am delighted to hear it," I said, "and I will go to M. de Boulogne's every day, and get you ap-

pointed chief administrator as soon as I know what I have got for myself."

I took care not to leave a stone unturned in this direction, as I knew that, with the great, promising and keeping a promise are two different things. The decree appeared a week after. Calsabigi was made superintendent, with an allowance of three thousand francs for every drawing, a yearly pension of four thousand francs for us both, and the chief of the lottery. His share was a much larger one than mine, but I was not jealous as I knew he had a greater claim than I.

I sold five of the six offices that had been allotted to me for two thousand francs each, and opened the sixth with great style in the Rue St. Denis, putting my valet there as a clerk. He was a bright young Italian, who had been valet to the Prince de la Catolica, the ambassador from Naples.

The day for the first drawing was fixed, and notice was given that the winning numbers would be paid in a week from the time of drawing at the chief office.

With the idea of drawing custom to my office, I gave notice that all winning tickets bearing my signature would be paid at my office in twenty-four hours after the drawing. This drew crowds to my office and considerably increased my profits, as I had six per cent. on the receipts. A number of the clerks in the other offices were foolish enough to complain to Calsabigi that I had spoilt their gains, but he

sent them about their business telling them that to get the better of me they had only to do as I did—if they had the money.

My first taking amounted to forty thousand francs. An hour after the drawing my clerk brought me the numbers, and shewed me that we had from seventeen to eighteen thousand francs to pay, for which I gave him the necessary funds.

Without my thinking of it I thus made the fortune of my clerk, for every winner gave him something, and all this I let him keep for himself.

The total receipts amounted to two millions, and the administration made a profit of six hundred thousand francs, of which Paris alone had contributed a hundred thousand francs. This was well enough for a first attempt.

On the day after the drawing I dined with Calsabigi at M. du Vernai's, and I had the pleasure of hearing him complain that he had made too much money. Paris had eighteen or twenty *ternes,* and although they were small they increased the reputation of the lottery, and it was easy to see that the receipts at the next drawing would be doubled. The mock assaults that were made upon me put me in a good humour, and Calsabigi said that my idea had insured me an income of a hundred thousand francs a year, though it would ruin the other receivers.

"I have played similar strokes myself," said M. du Vernai, "and have mostly succeeded; and as

for the other receivers they are at perfect liberty to follow M. Casanova's example, and it all tends to increase the repute of an institution which we owe to him and to you."

At the second drawing a *terne* of forty thousand francs obliged me to borrow money. My receipts amounted to sixty thousand, but being obliged to deliver over my chest on the evening before the drawing, I had to pay out of my own funds, and was not repaid for a week.

In all the great houses I went to, and at the theatres, as soon as I was seen, everybody gave me money, asking me to lay it out as I liked and to send them the tickets, as, so far, the lottery was strange to most people. I thus got into the way of carrying about me tickets of all sorts, or rather of all prices, which I gave to people to choose from, going home in the evening with my pockets full of gold. This was an immense advantage to me, as kind of privilege which I enjoyed to the exclusion of the other receivers who were not in society, and did not drive a carriage like myself—no small point in one's favour, in a large town where men are judged by the state they keep. I found I was thus able to go into any society, and to get credit everywhere.

I had hardly been a month in Paris when my brother Francis, with whom I had parted in 1752, arrived from Dresden with Madame Silvestre. He had been at Dresden for four years, taken up with the pursuit of his art, having copied all the battle

pieces in the Elector's Gallery. We were both of us glad to meet once more, but on my offering to see what my great friends could do for him with the Academicians, he replied with all an artist's pride that he was much obliged to me, but would rather not have any other patrons than his talents. "The French," said he, "have rejected me once, and I am far from bearing them ill-will on that account, for I would reject myself now if I were what I was then; but with their love of genius I reckon on a better reception this time."

His confidence pleased me, and I complimented him upon it, for I have always been of the opinion that true merit begins by doing justice to itself.

Francis painted a fine picture, which on being exhibited at the Louvre, was received with applause. The Academy bought the picture for twelve thousand francs, my brother became famous, and in twenty-six years he made almost a million of money; but in spite of that, foolish expenditure, his luxurious style of living, and two bad marriages, were the ruin of him.

END OF VOL. IV.